Dumbarton Oaks Park
32nd and R Streets, Northwest
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-571

PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DUMBARTON OAKS PARK HABS No. DC-571

Location: 32nd and R Sts., NW, Washington, District of Columbia. The estate is on the high ridge that forms the northern edge of Georgetown. Dumbarton Oaks Park, which was separated from the formal gardens when it was given to the National Park Service, consists of 27.04 acres designed as the "naturalistic" component of a total composition which included the mansion and the formal gardens. The park is located north of and below the mansion and the terraced formal gardens and focuses on a stream valley sometimes called "The Branch" (i.e., of Rock Creek) nearly 100' below the mansion. North of the stream the park rises again in a northerly and westerly direction toward the U.S. Naval Observatory. The primary access to the park is from R Street between the Dumbarton Oaks estate and Montrose Park along a small lane presently called Lovers' Lane.

Present Owner: Dumbarton Oaks Park is a Federal park, owned and maintained by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

Dates of Construction: Dumbarton Oaks estate was acquired by Robert Woods Bliss and Mildred Barnes Bliss in 1920. At their request, Beatrix Jones Farrand, a well-known American landscape architect, agreed to undertake the design and oversee the maintenance of the grounds. Her first official visit to Dumbarton Oaks took place in 1922. The bulk of garden and park construction--including the dams, bridges, edges and boundaries of the stream and ponds, paths and riding trail, as well as plantings--was put in place between 1923 and 1933. On November 27, 1940, only seven years after the completion of the landscape development, the mansion and formal gardens were given to Harvard University, and the "informal gardens" to the U.S. government. These "informal gardens" were turned over to the National Park Service as a park on December 2, 1940. Beatrix Farrand remained as landscape architect for the formal gardens surrounding the mansion until her retirement in 1947, and beyond as landscape architect emerita. She also continued to work with the Blisses on an informal basis, negotiating with the Park Service concerning questions of maintenance, and proposing adjustments needed to transform a private park to a public park.

Statement of Significance: Dumbarton Oaks Park is not a native woods; rather, it was designed as a "naturalistic" landscape in the pastoral landscape tradition to include the pastoral and wilderness elements as they would have been represented in an eighteenth-century American estate. It is a rare example of an urban estate that is still associated with a "wilderness" area. Beatrix Jones Farrand was one of the eleven founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the only woman. As landscape architect, Farrand brought together the European tradition of the Italian villa

garden, the more naturalistic English flower garden tradition, a profound knowledge of native American plant materials, and a sensitivity to ecological conditions. Although she called herself a landscape gardener rather than landscape architect, her gardens were set within a structured topography and worked in harmony with the total architectural complex.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The mansion house, now known as Dumbarton Oaks, was constructed in 1801 and was described in 1920, at the time it was purchased by Mildred Barnes Bliss and Robert Woods Bliss, as "an old-fashioned house standing in rather neglected grounds encumbered with farm buildings."[1] The house stands on the high ridge of land which forms the heights of Georgetown. South of the mansion, Georgetown slopes down toward the Potomac River, which once formed its busy harbor. The present-day houses of densely developed Georgetown date, for the most part, from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, although Georgetown itself predates the city of Washington. Beyond the mansion to the north, the land falls steeply toward the stream, sometimes called "The Branch," which flows in a mainly easterly direction from its headwaters northwest of Dumbarton Oaks Park, through the park, and beyond into Rock Creek. Across the stream to the north and west, Dumbarton Oaks Park slopes gently upward in the direction of Observatory Circle and Whitehaven Parkway.

Primary access to the park is from R Street, along Lovers Lane, a single paved lane which runs along the boundary between the Dumbarton Oaks Gardens and Montrose Park. Access is also possible from Whitehaven Street adjacent to Wisconsin Avenue, and from Whitehaven, approached from Massachusetts Avenue by foot.

The name, Dumbarton Oaks, derives from two earlier landholdings: the early eighteenth-century patent holding of Ninian Beall called Dumbarton Rock, and the Dumbarton mansion itself, called Oakly by John C. Calhoun, secretary of war and later vice president, when he was its proprietor during the early nineteenth century.

Landscape Architect: Beatrix Jones Farrand

Beatrix Jones Farrand (1872-1959) undertook to design the Dumbarton Oaks grounds including, of course, the park in 1921, and first visited the site in 1922. She continued as landscape architect until her formal retirement in 1947, and beyond as landscape architect emerita until ill health forced her to retire completely in early 1951. Farrand preferred the term "landscape gardener" to "landscape architect," reserving the word architect for designers of buildings.[2] Farrand's preference for the term landscape gardener might also have related to the fact that no formal training in landscape architecture had been available to her.

Farrand was born into a patrician family. As a child she knew the gardens of Newport, Rhode Island, including that of her grandmother. During the winter she lived on 11th Street just east of Fifth Avenue in New York City with her mother, Mary Cadwalader Jones, whose frequent guests included Brooks and Henry Adams, Henry James, and John La Farge. Her aunt, Edith Wharton, composed an early book on Italian villa gardens. Wharton, only ten years older than

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[1]Georgina Masson, Dumbarton Oaks: A Guide to the Gardens (Washington: Trustees for Harvard University, 1968), 3.

[2]Robert W. Patterson, "Beatrix Farrand, 1872-1959: An Appreciation of a Great Landscape Gardener," Landscape Architecture (Summer 1959): 217.

her niece, undoubtedly exchanged ideas with Farrand concerning the Italian sixteenth-century villa garden. Beatrix Farrand was Wharton's only close relative in the younger generation, and very nearly the only relative close to Wharton during Wharton's later years.[3]

As a young woman in her early twenties, Farrand had the opportunity to work as an apprentice to Harvard professor Charles Sprague Sargent, founder and first director of the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. While working for Sargent from 1892 to mid-1895, Farrand acquired an extensive knowledge of plant materials.

In 1893 Charles A. Platt, American neoclassical architect, had published a small volume, Italian Gardens, upon his return from a study trip to Italy with his brother. Platt became the leading exponent of classical formalism in the United States. He emphasized that the word "villa" in the Italian sense implies "all formal parts of the grounds arranged in direct relation to the house, the house itself being as much a part of it as the garden or the grounds."[4] Like Platt, Beatrix Farrand would think of the formal gardens adjacent to the house as exterior rooms, and look at the whole composition, villa and garden as one.

In spring 1895, following her work at the arboretum, Farrand traveled to Italy where she stayed until early summer. Her aunt, Edith Jones Wharton, could not have escorted her around Italy that spring since, according to her biographer, R. W. B. Lewis, she was experiencing a two-year "breakdown" between late 1894 and 1896. However, her aunt's knowledge and interest in Italian gardens must have reinforced her own understanding. In 1903 Edith Wharton had published a series of articles in Century Magazine, later issued as Italian Villas and Their Gardens, which expressed a clear conceptual understanding of sixteenth-century Italian villas at a time when such an appreciation was rare. Wharton understood the villa garden compositions of water, verdure, and marble as: (1) adapting to the architectural lines of the house adjoining it; (2) adapting to the requirements of the residents; and (3) adapting to the landscape around it.[5] Beatrix Farrand did visit some of the gardens about which her aunt wrote so eloquently, and shared, apparently, many of the same perceptions.

Following her trip to Italy, Farrand traveled to England where she studied the gardens around London, including Kew Gardens, Hampton Court, Hyde Park, and Kensington Gardens. She also visited Gertrude Jekyll, gardener and author.[6] Farrand must have refined her sensitivity to the effective use of color in gardens during her English experiences. Gertrude Jekyll may also have reinforced Farrand's propensity to use native plants. Jekyll wrote, "I am strongly for treating garden and wooded ground in a pictorial way, mainly with large effects, and in the second place with less beautiful incidents, and for so arranging plants and trees and grassy spaces that they look

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[3]R. W. B. Lewis, Edith Wharton: A Biography (New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. ed. Harper Colophon, 1977), 27.

[4]Charles A. Platt, Italian Gardens (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), 6.

[5]Edith Wharton, Italian Villas and Their Gardens (New York: Century, 1905; repr. DaCapo, 1976), 7.

[6]Eleanor McPeck, "Beatrix Jones Farrand: The Formative Years," Beatrix Jones Farrand: Fifty Years of American Landscape Architecture, ed. Diane Kostial McGuire and Lois Fern (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 26.

happy and at home, and make no parade of conscious effort. I try for beauty and harmony everywhere, and especially for harmony of color."[7]

Equally important to Farrand may have been the knowledge that she gained of native plants at her parents' home, later to be her home on Reef Point, Bar Harbor, Maine. One cannot plant in the fragile ecosystem of Maine without understanding the environment in which the plant is expected to live. Here she may also have gained her ecological awareness. One authority noted that it was because of her ecological awareness that she made a "conscious attempt to fashion an American idiom of landscape architecture."[8] Perhaps her sensitivity to the need to consider the ecology of the site is most evident in the naturalistic areas such as Dumbarton Oaks Park in which she seems to have read the dictates of the site and planned from what she read.

Upon her return Farrand opened a practice as landscape gardener, first from her mother's house in New York City and shortly thereafter, independently. Her early commissions were for estate gardens, at first for family acquaintances. However, from the beginning she was also professional in her dealings with her clients both concerning garden design and gardening as a business. Her most important gardens were located in the northeast, including a number in Maine near her family summer home.

Notable among her gardens that still survive are the Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in Seal Harbor, Maine, and, of course, Dumbarton Oaks Gardens, and Dumbarton Oaks Park. Among other gardens that Farrand designed were one for Edward Whitney dating from 1906, and eight years later another extensive garden for Dorothy Payne Whitney Straight, daughter of William C. Whitney, and her husband, Willard Straight, in Westbury on Long Island. In 1934 Farrand began another ambitious landscape plan for the then-widowed Mrs. Straight, after her marriage to Leonard Elmhirst, a Yorkshireman, at Dartington Hall in England. In 1942 Farrand designed a garden for Michael Straight, son of Dorothy and Willard Straight, in Fairfax County, Virginia. This sequence seems to illustrate that one way her commissions spread was by social connection.

Her commissions for the campuses of Princeton, Yale, Chicago, and Oberlin constitute significant works in the semi-public domain. These projects involved her in the rough and tumble of the male work world. Work done on the campuses often presented conflict with the architect in charge, as was the case at Princeton where architect Ralph Adams Cram tried unsuccessfully to prevent her from carrying out her designs. Her insistence on the establishment of nurseries as working parts of her campus landscapes indicates her desire to produce self-sufficient units in the fashion advocated by Gertrude Jekyll and English gardener William Robinson, and to achieve the self-reliance advocated by the Arts and Crafts movement.[9]

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[7]Gertrude Jekyll, On Gardening, ed. Elizabeth Lawrence (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 23.

[8]Marlene Salon, "Beatrix Jones Farrand: Pioneer in Gilt-Edged Gardens," Landscape Architecture (January 1977): 76.

[9]Diana Balmori, "Campus Work and Public Landscapes," Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses, ed. Diana Balmori, Diane Kostial McGuire, Eleanor McPeck (Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1985), 157, 140.

Although she lacked formal training, Beatrix Farrand's professional credentials were quickly acknowledged by her colleagues, and in 1899, before she was 30 years old, she was one of the eleven founders of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the only woman.[10]

In 1913, at a time when she was already well established in her profession, Beatrix Jones married Max Farrand, an historian at Yale University. She continued her practice in New York City at 124 E. 40th St. and in Maine. In 1927 after Max Farrand was asked to become director of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, the Farrands divided their time between the West Coast and Reef Point in Maine, although Beatrix Farrand continued to maintain her office in New York City. She never established an extensive practice in California. An extremely hard worker, Farrand traveled a great deal, using her travel time for working. Sometimes she asked her secretary to travel with her by train, taking notes for as long as needed, and then to return by herself to New York.[11] It is estimated that she designed as many as two hundred gardens in fifty years of practice.[12]

Reef Point became the primary home for the Farrands. It was there that they founded the Reef Point Center for the study of landscape gardening, which also included, in addition to remarkable gardens, a collection of garden prints, an extensive library of classics of garden literature and reference books, Gertrude Jekyll's legacy of plans and papers, and a horticultural herbarium of some 1,786 specimens.[13] The Farrands hoped to endow Reef Point as a center for study which would carry on beyond their lifetimes, but that was not to be.

By the time of Max Farrand's death in 1945, the Farrands had institutionalized the Reef Point Gardens. Unfortunately, Farrand's expectation of forming a garden study center were abandoned in 1955 when Beatrix Farrand concluded sadly that it was financially infeasible to maintain the corporation in the manner required, and therefore she donated most of that rare and valuable collection to the University of California in Berkeley. Some 5,000 to 10,000 of Farrand's letters, drawings, and sketches relating to Dumbarton Oaks had already been donated to the Garden Library at Dumbarton Oaks late in spring 1950. Farrand stipulated that the director of the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library would "undoubtedly . . . wish to notify the schools of Landscape Architecture that the material is at Dumbarton Oaks and will be available to properly accredited students."[14]

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[10]The charter members of the American Society of Landscape Architects were: Nathan F. Barrett, Beatrix Jones, Daniel W. Langton, Charles N. Lowrie, Warren H. Manning, John Charles Olmsted, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Samuel Parsons, Jr., George F. Pentecost, Jr., Ossian C. Simonds, and Downing Vaux. Norman T. Newton, Oesign on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 387.

[11]Balmori, 146.

[12]Diana Balmori, "Beatrix Farrand at Oumbarton Oaks: The Oesign Process of a Garden," Beatrix Jones Farrand, 103.

[13]Michael M. Laurie, "The Reef Point Collection at the University of California," Beatrix Jones Farrand, 17.

[14]Farrand to John S. Thacher, 11 April 1950, Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library Collection, Washington (hereafter DOGL).

The Clients: Mildred Barnes Bliss and Robert Woods Bliss

The Blisses were deeply concerned with promoting world peace, and will be remembered for hosting the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1942. The Dumbarton Oaks proposals, as amended at the Yalta Conference, would become the basis for negotiations at the San Francisco Conference that drafted the charter of the United Nations.

The relationship between Beatrix Farrand and Mildred Bliss and, indeed, the friendship between the Farrands and the Blisses would last for life. The evolving friendship between the two women was based on affection and mutual respect and it allowed for the evolution of what would become Farrand's greatest garden. Because the Blisses were so frequently out of the country, much of the garden work was carried on by letter with infrequent but eagerly awaited meetings at the site. The correspondence portrays the development of design ideas and friendship.[15]

Mrs. Bliss was much admired by architect Lawrence White, who wrote, "Her husband is only minister to Sweden, but she is every inch an ambassadress, if not an empress!"[16] Bernard Berenson and others were reported to have called Mildred Bliss, "Perfect Bliss."[17] The term Perfect Bliss had an ironic ring; Beatrix Farrand's terms of endearment were warmer. The earlier years show a lighthearted affection in the use of such mutual salutations as "Angel Trix" in 1925. "Is there anything you and I should have in our twin minds?" in 1937, "Dearest and best of all true friends" in 1942, "Beloved Garden Twin" in 1941, references to "Oakdom," and telegram names: Milrob and Maxtrix.

During the early years the correspondence was preoccupied by questions of design. Later, the problems of maintenance, particularly how to deal with increasingly frequent incidents of the dumping of fill and other materials, the destructive rush of storm water into the stream, and where and whether to allow the placement of storm sewer lines, became important questions demanding consideration by Farrand, the Blisses and the Park Service. Following the conveyance of the park area to the National Park Service, the questions of funding for maintenance as the war approached, of supervision, and the development of standards for maintenance became paramount considerations. The establishment (apparently never successfully) of an Advisory Committee for the park was urgently promoted by the Blisses and Farrand. Finally, by the mid-1940s questions of health and particularly the health of their two husbands took precedence in

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[15]The Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library collection includes a file of letters between Beatrix Farrand and the Blisses, as well as between Beatrix Farrand and John Thacher, first director of the Dumbarton Oaks study center. Unfortunately, there is a substantive gap in the letter sequence between 1924 and the mid-1930s, although some letters from this period exist in the archives of the New York Historical Association thanks to the fact that Lawrence Grant White, son of the renowned architect Stanford White, and architect in charge of remodeling the mansion, had worked closely with Beatrix Farrand. Other letters dating from 1940 to 1962 are located in the files of the National Park Service.

[16]Lawrence Grant White to a colleague at McKim, Mead and White, 18 September 1924, New York Historical Society, McKim Mead and White Collection, Bliss file (hereafter NYHS).

[17]Lewis, 372.

the correspondence of the two women. Neither the Blisses nor the Farrands had children, which fact may have heightened their sympathy for each other.

Design

Beatrix Farrand gave careful consideration to thc needs and objectives of her clients. At Dumbarton Oaks the Blisses required garden spaces that would be at their best in spring and fall, and also would be designed for the enjoyment of greens, texture and form during the winter. These were the seasons the Blisses expected to be in residence.

The Blisses would require large-scale garden areas close to the house for use in ceremonial entertaining, the kinds of outdoor rooms that Edith Wharton remarked on in Italian villa gardens. At Dumbarton Oaks the gardens, as Georgina Masson pointed out, were architectural and formal close to the house, but became increasingly informal in design, materials, and ornamentation as the distance from the house increased.[18] The formal and informal gardens near the house gave way to pastoral woods and meadows in the stream valley to the north, which was to become Dumbarton Oaks Park.

The stream valley and the rising hill beyond it would serve both as a background for the formal gardens and to create the illusion of country life, as Mildred Bliss recalled in her article in remembrance of Beatrix Farrand.[19] Georgiana Masson, author of the official guide to Dumbarton Oaks, found that the park "formed an integral part of the estate, and like those of old colonial mansions was furnished with a mill, a spring house and fish ponds--essential adjuncts of the life of American country estates which in those days had to be self-supporting units as their European prototypes had always been."[20]

In 1922, when Beatrix Farrand first visited Dumbarton Oaks and explored the stream valley, she found woods and meadow lands that had previously been farmed, as well as regularly spaced large trees whose wide canopies marked the edge of the woods road along an earlier pastoral preserve. Farrand also found that the edges of the park were blighted by dumping and occupied by unwanted buildings. Dumping behind the Rockville Road (Wisconsin Avenue) had been going on for many years. The Home for Incurables, then occupying the northeast corner of 32nd and S streets, had been acquired by the Blisses and was, according to Lawrence G. White, "of incredible size and ugliness."[21] Farrand was called upon to create a pastoral park out of old farm and forest lands, wild areas, dumps and old building sites. Pastoral though it became, it was not pristine to begin with.

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[18]Masson, 7.

[19]Mildred B. Bliss, "An Attempted Evocation of a Personality," Landscape Architecture (Summer 1959): 223.

[20]Masson, 25.

[21]Lawrence Grant White to an associate, 18 September 1924, NYHS.

Landscape architects from the Historic American Buildings Survey working in the park during summer 1989 identified old trees with widespreading canopies regularly spaced along the old service road. These trees were of such an age as to have predated Farrand's work, indicating that the stream valley had served not only as farm meadows but as a pastoral landscape in which trees were placed for shade and visual pleasure in rhythmic patterns following in the tradition of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. In the "naturalistic" park of woods and meadows, Farrand retained or added some native shrubs and trees, eliminated others, and occasionally included exotic species to appear as if natural. Beatrix Farrand seems to have defined "native" (or non-exotic) varieties more loosely than is now the case. She may have considered various American trees, such as the sugar maple, to be native, although they were not native to this region.

Farrand used existing trees, some of which were native and some imported, to mark design elements, including vistas, waterfalls, or turns in the path. Most of the falls of the stream and other landscape features such as the stone hridge, the stream arbor, the grotto and the mill ruin were designed within the existing tree pattern, and marked hy large tulip poplars. Selectively cleared open spaces were also designed within the existing tree pattern. The large oaks on Clifton Hill date from the mid-nineteenth century. Farrand must also have taken as given the farm road, an earlier hridge location, and of course the stream. In addition, the fence between the formal gardens and the park was already standing.

It is much more difficult to uncover the exact design intentions of Beatrix Farrand with regard to the park area than for the formal gardens. In 1941 when the mansion and gardens were given to Harvard University, Beatrix Farrand composed her Plant Book to describe each garden in detail and to list plant species used. Unfortunately there is no such garden book to describe the area that hecame the park, nor are there comparable descriptions or detailed drawings.[22]

The correspondence of Beatrix Farrand indicates that for naturalistic areas such as the park, Farrand did not use detailed drawings: rather, she wrote notes at the site, listed appropriate plants and worked directly from the site. A letter following Farrand's first visit to the site in 1922 provides the best available written description of her design intent, and is, therefore, quoted at length:

> The whole scheme for the north slopes of the property should properly be studied from the ground itself rather than from any plan, as the contours and expressions of the ground will control the plantations more strongly than any other feature. The brook certainly could he widened and dammed up at various points and used as a mirror in which to reflect large plantations of azaleas and iris, or overhanging dark masses of hemlock, with water-loving plants growing on the still surface, and walks arranged on the

[22]Diane Kostial Mcguire, "Introduction," Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1980), xvii. For the park, there is a list of plants and a plant location map drawn up in 1966 by a Park Service employee. Plant Location Map and List, National Archives Cartographic Division, Alexandria, Virginia, and files of the National Capital Region, 863/80,036, 2 sheets.

> different levels so that the plantations could be seen from above as well as from their own level. It is hoped that one ravine could be given over to a mass of azaleas, another to a plantation of Magnolias and crabs, and that a walk be arranged for the different varieties of lilac following the east boundary and in general making the old fashioned "circular walk" which was so usually a part of every eighteenth century design. It is also hoped that a part of the grounds could be developed as a "Wilderness" where hollies, yews, ivies and spring flowering Magnolias and winter flowering shrubs would make an attractive walk to be followed in winter. Another part of the grounds should have a primrose garden, possibly surrounded by a nut walk. A large mass of forsythia planted on one of the hillsides and in combination with the blue Lung wort and daffodils will be attractive at its own moment, and in the writer's mind the development of the north part of the place should be on the lines of a series of interesting plantations, each thought out for a certain season, and easily reached by a good walk and yet not conspicuously in view when it was not at its best.[23]

As this quotation indicates, Farrand began her landscape projects with an extensive examination of the existing site for which she showed great respect. According to Mildred Bliss, "never did Beatrix Farrand impose on the land an arbitrary concept. She 'listened' to the light and wind and grade of each area under study."[24]

The Blisses had turned first to Beatrix Farrand as landscape designer, and then to Lawrence G. White of McKim, Mead and White, son of Stanford White, who was asked to undertake the building renovations. Farrand herself had a strong sense of architectural structure and White regularly discussed his remodeling plans with Farrand. Her ability to work in three dimensions is evident in the entire garden complex, including the formal, informal, and naturalistic areas. Choices were made in consultation with the Blisses. For naturalistic areas such as the park, Beatrix Farrand did not use detailed drawings; rather, she worked directly from the site, making notes on the site, and listing appropriate plants. She had paths staked out, and probably used markers to indicate plant locations, as we know that she had done in the garden. In the garden she also used full-scale mockups of proposed garden furnishings for the Blisses to examine. The stone steps within the garden complex were carefully measured for easy walking and included many level areas. The formation of falls and pools, modeling the stream into areas of motion and repose, was the major feature of the naturalistic area.

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[23]Farrand, "THE OAKS," report to Mildred Bliss, 24 and 25 June 1922, DOGL. See Appendix A.

[24]Bliss, 223.

The transition between the informal gardens and the naturalistic area was subtle. A 1932 map shows the four connecting paths as they were originally located.[25] The descent down the hill from the formal gardens along the Hazel Walk must have afforded a view of the Laurel Pool, one of the focal points of the park. The Hazel Walk is the only path that was ramped without any steps. Just to the east a second major path to the stream valley passed down heavy slate steps at an easy pace through the forsythia garden at the bottom of the formal gardens (now much more closely trimmed than then), through the Forsythia Gate and down the hill, reaching the stream at the Three Bridge Falls. Two smaller paths also connected the gardens and the pastoral area: one to the far east, below the iris hillside, which reached the stream just to the east of the Stone Bridge, is no longer in evidence, and to the far west another path originally constructed of sandstone steps descended from the service court at the mansion toward the Italianesque pebble-lined channel below the Spring Grotto. This small path served as a connection between the house and the spring above the stream, which was used as a water source at some time prior to the purchase of the mansion by the Blisses.[26]

Diana Balmori, an authority on Beatrix Farrand and her work, concludes that Dumbarton Oaks creates "a space and an atmosphere which have an effect on those who enter it: it transmits a feeling of well-being, of quietness, of solitude, of seclusion even on days with hundreds of visitors. It is not a static garden; it induces you to make a garden journey. This journey alters sensations, through alterations of light and shadow, perfume, color, texture and sound--of water in fountains."[27] And, she might have added, of breezes through different foliages.

Photographs from the 1930s illustrate the high standard of maintenance that was evident at that time.[28] The meadows were open, and no undergrowth obscured relationships or views from the shaded paths and trails into the open meadows. The detailing was sharp. Edges of trails and pools were carefully marked in stone and plantings. The rustic arbor was covered by trimmed vines, and ferns filled the interstices of the wall above the serpentine seat. Water fell over the dams in a modulated fashion, and the pools were surrounded by simple plantings. The Plant Book spelled out the importance that Farrand placed on proper, perpetual maintenance for the formal gardens. She saw the garden as an organic entity which kept changing in scale, texture and color from season to season, as well as from year to year. Maintenance required as much art as did designing, and had to be provided for from the beginning and always thereafter.

Few changes to the park occurred in the short time the Blisses owned it. In 1938 the Unicorn Lady, a sculpture now located just north of the mansion, was placed, on a black lava base imported from California, among the rhododendrons at the west end of the park near the animal

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[25]Berrall and Farrand, Bliss Valley Survey: Physical Features, National Archives RG69.637-7-3, 863/80,007.

[26]Harry Thompson, Memorandum Re Inspection of Dumbarton Oaks, 20 November 1942, NPS Archives 1460 Dumbarton Oaks (hereafter NPS). See Appendix A.

[27]Balmori, "Beatrix Farrand at Dumbarton Oaks: The Design Process of a Garden," Beatrix Jones Farrand, 122.

[28]Some of these have been copied for the HABS collection. When these photographs are compared to photographs taken from similar angles by the photographer for the Historic American Buildings Survey during the summer of 1988, changes in the park that have occurred since the completion of the park are only too apparent.

cemetery, despite concern about possihle vandalism. At the same time, the forsythia arch located at the "unfortunate" fence dividing the formal gardens from the park was the subject of great interest. Arched wings to the fence and a gate of wood and iron were proposed. Farrand suggested that "the arch-way as entrance to the park from Dumbarton Oaks and vice versa should carry some weight, actual and metaphorical."[29]

During spring 1941, the first year of National Park Service stewardship, Farrand and the Blisses were stressing the need to widen the path by the stream and add a new path across Clifton Hill to the north to form a circuit that would facilitate the movement of larger numbers of people through the park. The Blisses and Farrand were concerned that the location of the new path be appropriate and that it be staked out so that it could be viewed by the proposed Advisory Committee.[30] But in November 1941 the question of the location of the new path had not yet been settled, although the superintendent of grounds for the formal gardens had staked out the path prior to the proposed meeting of the Advisory Committee set for November 21. At the same time, locations were being chosen for the three stone benches owned by the Bliss estate. A Park Service memorandum concerning the meeting mentions that it was suggested that the steps for the new walk "be made of double railroad ties with [a] single tie for riser pegged in place. [The] walk on hillside to be retained by single row of field stone and made inconspicuous."[31]

In November 1942, a letter from Beatrix Farrand to Harry Thompson, a landscape architect and chief of the Planning Division of the National Capital Region of the National Park Service, listed planting replacements proposed by the Park Service, and the actual plantings thought necessary by Farrand. The comparison indicates that Farrand wished to keep the plantings simple and suggested that many fewer plants be added than had been proposed. Farrand used the plantings to help to define physical features such as the stream and pool waterlines.[32] On the same day, Thompson wrote a memorandum for Park Service files discussing removal of the sandstone steps that originally paralleled the "Italianesque" pebble-lined channel, and the restoration of the stream pools.[33]

Plans and Problems

The two years following acquisition of the park by the Park Service were marked by the endeavor of Beatrix Farrand and the Blisses to assure that the Park Service would sustain the previous level of maintenance of the park. Optimistic to begin with, the Park Service personnel

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[29]Bliss to Farrand, 22 March 1938, DOGL.

[30]See below, Plans and Problems.

[31]Memorandum, 24 November 1941, NPS. See Appendix A.

[32]This letter, dated November 11, 1942, is included in Appendix A because it contains specific information on numbers and species of plants and their use.

[33]Harry Thompson, Memorandum, 11 November 1941, NPS.

hoped to comply, but all too soon insufficient funds and increasing siltation, caused by construction on adjacent properties, loomed as major threats. It became evident that resources would be withdrawn from the park during the war. After the war, early expectations of increased funding were not realized. The number of maintenance personnel was insufficient and the park was inadequately cared for, despite the dedication of park personnel who were assigned to Dumbarton Oaks Park, and despite a variety of activities and protections which were then available but are no longer provided. Children and adults frequently enjoyed bird and botanical walks. A great variety of early spring plantings were protected by limiting access to weekends and holidays between early spring and late fall.[34] Unfortunately, in 1972 the park began to slide into its present state when the administrative structure for the parks of the National Capital Region was drastically reordered. Dumbarton Oaks, originally a unit under Rock Creek Park, was separated from this park and put under the jurisdiction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. At the same time, personnel familiar with Dumbarton Oaks Park were either retired or transferred to other areas.

By the time the park was returned to the jurisdiction of Rock Creek Park in 1976, growth within the park was out of control. Vines and undergrowth were rampant and the dumping of fill on adjacent properties had washed huge quantities of silt into the stream during high water, damaging dams, ponds, and plant materials. Unfortunately, many of the existing plant materials originally planted as part of the designed exotic landscape were damaged or obscured by "volunteer" vegetation during a period in which park resource management policy was to manage the park as a "natural" area--i.e., volunteer workers were allowed to remove only "exotic" vines and trees, but were told to leave wild grapevines which grew into and overwhelmed trees such as dogwoods and crabapples originally planted by Farrand. Likewise, "natives" which had seeded themselves in meadow areas were allowed to remain.

An examination of the park in 1989 shows that overland siltation from construction sites appears to be stabilized. However, some pollution (oil or gas) is evident in the water coming through the culvert that drains from the original springs, now buried, as well as from impervious surfaces within the Naval Observatory grounds and elsewhere. More seriously, the uncontrolled storm drainage, which periodically dumps cascades of water carrying logs and debris down the stream, remains a major problem. The destructive growth of vines and undergrowth and the neglect of existing plantings has been somewhat ameliorated due to selective removal by several volunteer groups under the direction of park personnel.

Funding

Dumbarton Oaks Park was acquired with enthusiasm by the National Park Service in December 1940. Nevertheless, Park Service personnel were concerned about funding as early as March 1941. A letter from Acting Secretary of the Interior A. J. Wirtz to Frederic A. Delano, chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, worried that "no appropriations for maintenance or protection [of Dumbarton Oaks Park] have been made." Further, it is

[34]In fact, access was controlled until about 1970. An alternative might have been to provide more rangers.

difficult, Wirtz added, for the National Park Service to extend even a limited service in this area.[35] Four days later, Delano replied to Wirtz, noting that there was nothing in the present or next fiscal year's budget for the park. He asked whether they should try for a supplemental appropriation for Dumbarton and perhaps other Washington parks as a part of the Deficiency Bill.[36] In April Irving C. Root, superintendent of the National Capital Parks, suggested that they not ask for the inclusion of a supplemental appropriation because of the positive attitude of members of the House Committee during hearings on budget estimates for the following year, fiscal year 1942. His office, he added, would provide a specific item for the maintenance of Dumbarton Oaks Park in its budget estimates for fiscal 1943. Root then expected an increase in maintenance funds from Congress for fiscal 1942 sufficient to cover the park.[37] In May 1941 Farrand wrote to Root mentioning that the Blisses were talking about providing assistance for the park, specifically aid for widening the path along the stream side and for the possible construction of a path across Clifton Hill, north of the stream. Aid could be in the form of funds or the work of "three old men," her trusted gardeners. However, Farrand noted that Mrs. Bliss did not wish to go ahead until an advisory committee to the park had been established.[38]

Apparently not much had been accomplished by March 1942, nearly a year later, when John Thacher, director of Dumbarton Oaks Study Center, wrote to Beatrix Farrand that while the maintenance men from the Park Service were dredging out the "Branch" they noted that they lacked money and men to do a competent job at the park.[39] In April Farrand wrote to Thacher to say that Mrs. Bliss had again taken up the subject of the possibility of a fund for the use of the park. It was hoped that a direct gift to the park could be arranged so that it would be used exclusively at Dumbarton Oaks Park.[40] Farrand and Bliss sought an estimate for annual maintenance from the National Capital Regional office, expressing concern that Park Service maintenance funds might be reduced to the extent of a Bliss gift. Meanwhile a letter from Donald F. Kline, chief of the Planning Division of the National Capital Region, described a bleak prospect. For fiscal year 1943, National Capital Parks had proposed an amount of $8,600 for the maintenance of Dumbarton Oaks Park in its present condition. That amount was reduced to $3,988 during its journey through the hands of the District Commissioners and the federal Budget Bureau. Kline added, "It is believed that we will be fortunate if this item of approximately $4,000 stays in the bill. It is also pointed out that although this item is granted, the total overall appropriation for National Capital Parks has been decreased over that appropriated for the fiscal year 1942. Therefore, it is probable that even though the bill passes with the item of $4,000

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[35]A. J. Wirtz to F. A. Delano, 21 March 1941, NPS.

[36]Delano to Wirtz, 25 March 1941, NPS.

[37]Irving C. Root to Delano, 3 April 1941, NPS.

[38]Farrand to Root, 31 May 1941, DOGL.

[39]Thacher to Farrand, 16 March 1942, DOGL.

[40]Farrand to Thacher, 10 April 1942, DOGL.

remaining in the bill it will be exceedingly difficult for National Capital Parks to adequately maintain the area due to the overall reduced total maintenance budget."[41]

A few days later Ellis Russell of New York City, apparently a secretary to a financial adviser to the Blisses, wrote to Beatrix Farrand in answer to her airmail special regarding an endowment for Dumbarton Oaks Park. He suggested that if an endowment were created it would require an independent trust company to hold and invest the trust and to dispense the income upon the direction of some committee appointed by the deed of trust. He also feared that the creation of a trust would result in a reduction *pro tanto* of public funds, and would therefore have to be sufficient to cover the entire cost of maintenance of the park.[42] A final mention of the trust fund is found in a letter written at the end of June in which Thacher reported to Farrand on a meeting that took place at Dumbarton Oaks Park, saying that the Blisses were "deeply shocked" by the condition of the park, the "Branch," the condition of many of the trees, and the lack of weeding. No action had been taken on the trust fund, and Thacher surmised that the Blisses had decided to do nothing until the Park Service had taken some action.[43]

At the end of June, Kline reported to the Blisses and others that the District Commissioners had taken charge of the parks budget, including that of Dumbarton Oaks, an ill omen.

The park was never properly funded. Personnel previously associated with the park unanimously stated in recent interviews that there had been insufficient personnel to maintain the park properly even before 1972.[44] In 1972 when the park was taken from the jurisdiction of Rock Creek Park and turned over to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, it deteriorated rapidly. Apparently the institutional memory that guided maintenance was lost. After it was returned to Rock Creek Park in 1976, it continued to deteriorate due to misguided resource management as a "natural" area.

Dumping, Flooding, and Siltation

The problem of storm water run-off and the silting of the stream was less severe at the time the Blisses purchased the land, despite recent construction along Wisconsin Avenue, because the park was then surrounded by meadows and woods which acted as a sponge to absorb the water. The acceleration of building along Wisconsin Avenue and at the Naval Observatory created impermeable surfaces which accumulated flood waters previously absorbed into the land for slow release. As building near the perimeters of the park has increased, the Park Service has had to depend upon the storm sewer to handle the storm run-off. As early as 1909 a storm and sanitary sewer line had been placed in the stream valley, generally following the stream bed. The

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[41]Donald L. Kline to Farrand, 21 May 1942, NPS.

[42]Ellis Russell to Farrand, 25 May 1942, DOGL.

[43]Thacher to Farrand, 27 June 1942, DOGL.

[44]See telephone interviews with park personnel in Part III below.

storm and sanitary sewers from Dumbarton Oaks fed into this line. In early 1942 run-off from the direction of more new construction along Wisconsin Avenue was a continuing problem. In response to a statement by the D.C. surveyor in connection with a readjustment of proposed streets near Wisconsin Avenue, tbat "[i]t should be definitely understood that surface drainage pockets would discharge over surface of park lands, rather than . . . [by] sub-surface [drainage]," Irving Root, superintendent of the National Capital Region, reminded the surveyor that he, Root, had no response to a proposal by the Park Service for the construction of a reservoir to hold excess flood waters for slow release.[45] Although some European countries have required that storm drainage be contained within the property generating the problem, this proposal was rejected in the District of Columbia. As an altemative, and after a great deal of negotiation among the District, the Park Service, Beatrix Farrand and the Blisses, a storm sewer line identified as "D" was agreed upon as the best means to provide control of excess storm run-off from the direction of Wisconsin Avenue above S Street, despite Beatrix Farrand's prescient and explicit concern that the problem water was originating north of the park from the direction of the Naval Observatory. The route of line "D" was staked out in September 1942 and approved by all parties in November.[46] Within the park it would have followed, generally, the horse path on the north side of the stream.

What made the storm water run-off particularly damaging was the dumping of raw earth on construction sites. Raw earth was carried into the stream during heavy rains and caused silting up of the ponds and damage to the plantings along the stream. Dumping had been a problem for the Blisses from the beginning. The very month the park was acquired by the Park Service, a memorandum noting that dumping was going on from land in private ownership at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and S Street recommended that legal action be taken.[47] By mid-1942 fill coming from work going on at the Naval Observatory was causing what was called a very difficult maintenance job within the park. This matter was taken to the highest levels. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes wrote to "My Dear Secretary" (of the Navy) Frank Knox about the intolerable situation resulting from fill washing into the stream. Knox replied that temporary measures to arrest the action would be taken immediately, and a study made for a permanent improvement.[48] Serious tropical rain storms in August 1942 brought down fresh fill from the observatory grounds, causing more serious damage.[49] At the same time, fill was running down from the District of Columbia's Home School site (now the Guy Mason Recreation Center) through the Navy's drainpipe into the stream. It was estimated that more than 200 cubic yards of

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[45]D.C. Surveyor to Root, 3 January 1942, and Root to D.C. Surveyor, 28 January 1942, NPS.

[46]At the same time that Donald L. Kline, chief of the Planning Division of the National Capital Parks, accepted the sewer line "D" for the Park Service, he suggested that the National Capital Park and Planning Commission acquire the land at the headwaters of the stream to help assure the future of the stream. Part of what Kline proposed for acquisition was eventually acquired and is known as U.S. Reservation 357.

[47]Memorandum from the acting Chief of Planning, National Capital Region, 11 December 1940, NPS.

[48]Harold Ickes to Frank Knox, 13 June 1942, and Knox to Ickes, 22 June 1942, NPS.

[49]Root to Captain J. Gellway, USN, retired, Commandant U.S. Naval Observatory, 10 August 1942, NPS.

earth was cut out from unprotected fill behind an A&P store on Wisconsin Avenue.[50] Harry T. Thompson, the new chief of the Planning Division at tbe National Capital Region, believed that the approved sewer line "D" in conjunction with plans to reduce the run-off from the Naval Observatory and the Home School (probably the proposed land acquisition) would improve tbe situation. Unfortunately, on 3 Fehruary 1943, the War Production Board disallowed priorities for any sewer work, and line "D" was never built.[51]

Periodic flooding continued into 1943. In July the Park Service was still pleading with the District to control run-off from tbe Home School and with the Navy to control run-off from the Naval Observatory. The Park Service offered expertise and assistance, but progress does not seem to bave been rapid.

In 1944 another dumping problem arose on a site just above S Street on Wisconsin Avenue. Dumped materials rolled onto the park fence, destroying tbe fence. Pleading innocent, the trustee for the owners asked the Metropolitan Police to arrest trespassers who were dumping. In 1949 a paving company was found to be dumping fill at the western edge of the park. At the end of 1950, the Park Service maintenance personnel complained to the Park Service attorney that a "vast amount of sedimentary material is being deposited above our property and carried into the park during heavy rains."[52] The Park Service was pressed from within to accept the view tbat the property owner could be considered liable if he caused disturbance to the natural surface grounds of his neighbor.[53]

From 1954 through 1960, considerable negotiations took place between the Park Service and the Danish Embassy concerning run-off from embassy landscaping and construction at the embassy on Whitehaven Street. This problem was resolved by the construction of a sewer line through the park to the main line at the stream. (The embassy was, however, turned down in its request to cut trees on the slope facing Dumbarton Oaks mansion to improve its view.)

In mid-1959 a request was made by the developers of the Page Building on Wisconsin Avenue to construct an 18" storm sewer terminating in a headwall at tbe existing stream. Permission was granted in February 1960 to build a storm drain subject to certain conditions, including that "the debris and silt against the chain link fence crossing the stream in front of this proposed sewer outlet be removed to provide free access for the flow of water and eliminate the possibility of overturning the fence."[54] Ten years later run-off from the parking lot at the Page Building was still causing serious encroachment. Holding reservoirs were proposed, but Donohoe

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[50]Gellway to Root, 12 August 1942, NPS.

[51]In 1957 an additional storm and sanitary sewer line was added from Wisconsin Avenue, starting just below the junction of Wisconsin Avenue and 34th Street. This storm sewer merged into the 1909 line along the stream.

[52]Memorandum, G. W. Harding, Chief, Horticulture and Maintenance Division, National Capital Region, to A. J. Knox, Senior Attorney, NPS, 6 December 1950, NPS.

[53]Memorandum, A. J. Knox, 18 January 1951, NPS.

[54]Robert C. Horne, NPS, to Richard J. Donohoe, et al., 8 February 1960, NPS.

Construction Company, the owner/builder, refused to establish reservoirs for holding water for gradual release.[55] Photographs taken in July 1969 show serious damage to the fence and to the land. (Silt had been draining from this area since 1944.) Finally in September 1970 Donohoe sent a request to the superintendent, National Capital Parks, North, with a specific proposal for the construction of a headwall to be angled downstream, faced with fieldstone and to include several large stones in front of the outlet to break the force of the stream.[56] That design proposal was apparently built.

At the present time there seems to be little over-the-surface drainage into the park and stream. A surface drainage reservoir has been constructed behind the Holiday Inn on Wisconsin Avenue, which seems to be effective. However, the culverts emptying into the stream carry excess water during a heavy storm. The culvert that empties a drainage system from north of the unbuilt portion of Whitehaven Parkway continues to carry more and more water as impermeable surfaces increase at the Naval Observatory. Silt continues to wash into the stream from the slope behind the Safeway store.

Heavy storms later in summer 1989 did result in high volumes of water flowing into the stream. The effects of surging waters were compounded by fallen trees and brush that had not been cleared from the vicinity of the stream within tbe park. This debris was pushed against the dams with great force by the stream water, causing the water course to change, often flowing around the dam, washing out bank plantings and forming new channels. Many of the dams originally had storm water plugs which could be removed in case of heavy flooding, or during the winter. This device would help to prevent flood damage, as it did in the early years.

Park Maintenance and the Advisory Committee

Certainly Beatrix Farrand developed maintenance procedures for the park; unfortunately they were never set forth in a single document as they were for the formal gardens. During 1941 and 1942 Farrand worked intensively with park administrators. She expressed particular admiration for Newton B. Drury, director of the National Park Service, Irving C. Root, superintendent of the National Capital Parks, and Harry T. Thompson, chief of the Planning Division of the National Capital Parks.

At that time, an attempt was made to set up an Advisory Committee on Dumbarton Oaks Park. The Blisses had considered providing for an Advisory Committee in their deed of the property to the United States, but did not do so. Nevertheless, they remained adamant that such a committee should be established.[57] In May 1941 Mildred Bliss linked the creation of an Advisory Committee to the contribution of the work of her "three old men" for maintenance and

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[55]Memorandum, Superintendent, National Capital Parks North, to the General Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 11 February 1970, NCR.

[56]Donohoe to the superintendent, National Capital Parks, North, 10 September 1970, NCR.

[57]R. W. Bliss to N. B. Drury, 24 June 1941, NPS.

path widening. "Poke up Mr. Root as to his answer re the Committee," Farrand suggested.[58] Root had proposed a committee of five persons: (1) a Bliss family member; (2) a Harvard representative; (3) Beatrix Farrand; (4) Irving Root; and (5) one to be decided upon. Initially, at least, Root welcomed the possibility of collaboration between the Advisory Committee and the Park Service. But creation of the committee did not progress rapidly and in July Farrand wondered whatever happened to the Dumbarton Oaks Advisory Committee. Is it the heat and "general liquefying of brains and energy?"[59] In November 1941 Farrand suggested a meeting of persons being considered for the Advisory Committee to take place at the end of the month to approve the walk to be staked out across the face of Clifton Hill.[60] Notes from this meeting are included in the Park Service files, but neither Bliss attended and it was not considered to be a meeting of the Advisory Committee.[61]

Formal invitations to join the Advisory Committee were sent out by the National Park Service toward the end of March 1942. At the same time, Beatrix Farrand asked John Thacher to make an urgent telephone call to Irving Root regarding the stream conditions. "I regard cleaning of the Branch as an essential part of park upkeep," she said.[62] The response was reassuring. John Thacher reported an entire army corps dredging the stream and pond.[63] The fact that Farrand was concerned that the plants not be removed with the mud suggests that it was a delicate operation to remove the silt left by flash flooding. An Advisory Committee meeting set for early April was postponed first until the end of tbe month, and then until early June due to Beatrix Farrand's case of flu. Meanwhile, the chief of Horticulture and Maintenance at the Park Service fired off an angry note to Root regarding the use of horticulture men for park maintenance.[64] A meeting of the Advisory Committee did take place in June. It was at this time that Mr. and Mrs. Bliss were reported to be deeply shocked by the condition of the park and drew back from their proposal to fund the maintenance of the park, as mentioned above. Unprecedented rainstorms of spring, summer, and fall 1942 took their toll.

In early September 1942 Irving Root asked for the approval of the Advisory Committee with regard to the location for the proposed sewer line "D." At the same time, difficulties seemed to be developing. Farrand and Thacher were of the view that tbe Park Service had done little to maintain the park.[65] In November Harry Thompson readily acknowledged the storm damage to

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[58]Farrand to Thacher, 13 May 1941, DOGL.

[59]Farrand to Root, 9 July 1941, NPS.

[60]Farrand to Root, 3 November 1941, NPS and DOGL.

[61]See notes of meeting in Appendix A.

[62]Farrand to Thacher, 25 March 1942, DOGL.

[63]Thacher to Farrand, 26 March 1942, DOGL.

[64]Harding to Root, 5 June 1942, NPS.

[65]Thacher to Farrand, 10 September 1942, DOGL.

the stream and dams, which he characterized as an unholy mess.[66] Thompson attempted to place sufficient maintenance personnel in the park to bring it back to good condition. He had already ordered replacements for the rhododendrons and the mountain laurels. Just before the new year, Thompson wrote to Farrand saying that he had ordered some 1,600 herbaceous plants as replacements, and that plans were underway to revise the pool shorelines as soon as rains and winter mud would permit.[67] Despite the serious storm damage of 1942 and suggestions of neglect by the owners, the end of the year brought some optimism. The route for the proposed sewer line "D" had been agreed upon by all, and Harry Thompson was working to achieve proper maintenance. The end-of-the-year optimism carried over into the next year when Beatrix Farrand set out her objectives for the park in a letter to Harry Thompson dated March 29, 1943.[68] Unfortunately, Farrand's letter must have arrived just after Thompson had reported that the District had advised him that the War Production Board had disallowed priority for any sewer work. This bode ill for park priorities.

Although Farrand did not retire from her work in the formal gardens until 1947, she seems to have done little more for the park. In October 1946 Harry Thompson wrote to Robert W. Patterson, who Farrand hoped would succeed her: "There is in existence an advisory committee for Dumbarton Oaks Park but it has been inactive for so long that I am not even clear as to its membership although I am sure that Mr. and Mrs. Bliss are represented on it."[69] Thus the Advisory Committee never really took hold.

The Park Service continued to maintain the park to the satisfaction of many, despite the continuing ravages of storm water and the ensuing washouts and siltation. A letter from one park user in April 1956 states that he had never seen the park as beautiful as at that time. He complimented the Park Service employee for his winter work of clearing the meadows and underbrush from the woods.[70] Two years later, however, the director of Dumbarton Oaks, John Thacher, requested a meeting with Harry Thompson to discuss the poor condition of the stream valley and park signs. Following the meeting, Thompson agreed that the signs would be refurbished, the forsythia trimmed back of the edge of the walk (although Beatrix Farrand had originally had the forsythia trailing onto the walk), dead trees and limbs would be removed within the more intensively maintained areas to the extent that "manpower is available," certain shrubs would be thinned out, the stream bed cleaned out, and the "plugs at the dams would not be put back in until danger from freezing action is past . . . the best procedure to counteract the silting from various construction activities in the vicinity of Wisconsin Avenue."[71]

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[66]Thompson to Farrand, 11 November 1942, NPS.

[67]Thacher to Farrand, 30 December 1942, DOGL and NPS.

[68]This letter and the letter which Farrand wrote in 1922 following her first visit to the park make up the most complete statement of the philosophy of the park. These two letters are included in Appendix A.

[69]Thompson to R. W. Patterson, 8 October 1946, NPS.

[70]Park user's letter, 10 April 1956, NPS.

[71]Memorandum, National Park Service to Thacher, 19 November 1958, NPS.

Interviewed in 1989, maintenance personnel formerly associated with the park generally perceived that although the park had been undermanned, it at least beld its own until 1972, tbe date of the administrative reorganization. One former maintenance person said that tbe park was always considered to be the "left over park." The lack of adequate maintenance since about 1972 has allowed the runaway growth of vines, particularly porcelain berry (Ampelopsis beterophylla) and Asian bittersweet, which has caused major permanent damage to other plants. Flooding, especially when the bloated stream picks up downed trees tbat bave not been removed, is very damaging to dams and stream banks, as described above.

During the 1970s the Italian government planned to build a new embassy at the southwest corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Whitehaven Street. Negotiations with the Park Service added a footnote to park history. The proposed site, lot 803, impinged upon the lower end of Lovers Lane. In return for Park Service agreement to a necessary cbange in zoning, the Italian government had proposed to transfer two small pieces of land to the National Park Service in order to fill out Lovers Lane. A new embassy bas now been approved for construction, but a natural buffer will be left between the building and the park.

In 1976 the Advisory Board on National Parks and Historic Sites considered the designation of tbe Dumbarton Oaks estate as a National Historic Landmark. Although the estate was included on tbe National Register of Historic Places as part of the Georgetown Historic District, separate designation as a landmark was requested to give the gardens additional protection from a proposal to construct a library addition under the north lawn beyond the music room, which would have destroyed mature trees and changed the elevations and proportions of the gardens. However, the nomination was "deferred without prejudice" because it was felt that it should have been submitted as part of a national landscape theme study which was still to be done. Fortunately, the underground addition was not built due to public and professional outcries against it.

Park Service personnel from the National Capital Region and the members of the team of landscape architects and others from the Historic American Buildings Survey have worked together with great commitment to document Dumbarton Oaks Park, both as it was in its prime when it served as the pastoral preserve for the Dumbarton Oaks garden complex, and as it exists today. By reading the ground, the landscape architects were able to discover traces of stonework and wood construction, as well as the locations of plants dating from Beatrix Farrand's garden design and to identify the trees that had bordered the earlier farm lanes. Remarkable discoveries were made and have been recorded in the accompanying measured drawings. Vistas were detected and understood. The stream and pond edges were identified as Farrand had intended them to be located; bridges and dams were recorded. Beatrix Farrand's intentions were recognized, clarified and recorded before the evidence was lost. It is hoped that tbe documentation of the park may serve not only as an historical record but also to arouse interest in the restoration of the park to its former pastoral tranquility. The Blisses gave the park to tbe Park Service with the wish that it would provide a chance for the people of Washington to enjoy the coming of the seasons in all the beauty that this region of the country manifests.

PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The focus of the park is the stream that divides the park into two physical as well as visual entities. Along the south side of the stream, a footpath is connected to the meadows on the north side at varying intervals by simple bridges or fords. Upstream to the northwest, the footpath crosses over to the north side and continues to roughly parallel the stream to its source in the northwest corner of the property. Pedestrian traffic along this path is directed against the flow of the stream, allowing the best view of the series of waterfalls and pools. Seating areas and architectural features also focus attention on the stream. Originally, certain areas of the hillside to the south were designed to draw attention, but these views of the hillside have been obscured by overgrowth and the separation between the formal garden and the pastoral landscape.

The old road, or horse path, along which one enters the park, crosses the stone bridge to the north side of the stream where it continues to parallel the stream and then turns north. A series of upsloping meadows are located to the right of this road. The meadows are separated from one another by woods. The road on the north is punctuated by black walnut trees, in much the same way the tulip poplars are used on the south side of the stream. The northern border of the property is also heavily wooded, blocking any view of neighborhoods to the north and giving a sense of wilderness. Although the location is urban, the topography and border woods obscure any perception of this setting.

Main Entrance: Lovers Lane Entrance to Stone Bridge

The principal entrance to the park is now reached by Lovers Lane, after the steep descent from R Street. As Lovers Lane curves to the east, a vehicular road leads into the park to the west. This configuration gives the impression of being "natural," rather than designed. The appearance is enhanced by a 45 degree angle to Lovers Lane and not a more formal 90 degree angle. This entrance path is sited on a ledge cut into an otherwise uniform slope to the stream bed.

Running the length of Lovers Lane on the west side is a stone retaining wall constructed of rough-cut, random-coursed fieldstone. This entrance is marked by 7' tall, 2' square piers constructed of the same cut fieldstone. The southern pier is attached to the retaining wall, while the other pier is freestanding, supported by a buttress. The retaining wall continues into the park, following the curve of the road. Once inside the park, the cut fieldstone is no longer used. Here, the wall is constructed of random rubble, abruptly signaling a change to the naturalistic design of the park. The hillside retaining wall, a man-made control of the slope, tapers off fairly quickly, opposite the stone shed, near the bridge. The bank above was controlled by changing the slope and by ground cover.

The gate piers introduce a terrace which has been cut into an otherwise uniform slope line from the formal gardens to the stream. The park road is located on this man-made terrace. The cut into the slope to form a terrace makes the hillside toward the garden appear steep. On the other side of the road, the hillside drops quickly to the stream bed. The path is wide in this section, approximately 15', and covered in gravel.

From the entrance gateway, the road curves immediately toward the west, and then turns north, crossing the stream at the stone bridge. This configuration obscures any extended view of the park. Instead, the view is focused on the stone shed framed by the meadow beyond, but both are only barely visible due to uncontrolled growth of the underbrush. The framing of picturesque views occurs throughout the park.

The right side of the path is edged in tall beech trees. These mature beeches have few lower branches to block the view. The higher branches create a canopy over the road, while the trunks act as a vertical framing device, giving this area in the direction of the bridge the appearance of a corridor or entry hall. The quality of the smooth gray bark is accentuated by the backdrop of dense green foliage. Here the uncontrolled growth of eye-level underbrush is particularly intrusive because it obscures the intended view. Overgrowth is a problem in almost every section of the park, but the steep slope to the stream bed and the distance between the stream and the path (roughly 20') make this area particularly vulnerable to damaging intrusion.

The controlled, picturesque park entrance signals a "naturalistically" designed park beyond. The intended panorama to the stone shed includes a heavily planted hillside on the left, sloping to a terraced road covered in gravel, a single-arch stone bridge and stone shed, and an open grassy meadow in the background. This picturesque effect is further heightened by diffused sunlight through a dense canopy. The stream which serves as the spine of the entire park plays a passive role in this initial tableau. Attention is drawn away from the hillside on the left below the formal gardens, although the road runs closer to the edge of the garden here than at any other point in this park. Originally the dark ivy on the steep hillside to the left would have directed the view toward the stream. However, controlled seasonal growth now blocks much of this intended view.

The initial impression on entering the park is of a combination of natural and constructed elements. The constructed elements include strong architectural features, and the natural, a careful manipulation of the existing watershed highlighted by specimen plantings. This view is controlled by the presence of the bridge and stone shed, as well as by several large beech trees that line the north side of the path. This is the most architectural (used here to denote hard, constructed features) view in Dumbarton Oaks Park.

This entrance area constitutes a transition zone between the footpath on the south side of the stream and the broad meadows and vehicular road to the north. The broad, open road and the sharp right angles created by the retaining wall on the south side, and the tall beeches on the north, all serve to ereate the appearance of a formal, architectonic design. To the west, the path becomes narrow and curvilinear, breaking from the more formal aspect of the entrance road.

At the curve in the road, there are two osage orange trees on the right. Just past the curve, the stream can be seen more easily. The stream and the road are divided by a gentle slope, as the two run in a parallel direction. The large beech trees lining the path further emphasize the curve to the bridge. The first open view of the stream is demarcated by the largest of these beech trees. Near this tree, rail-tie steps, laid diagonally to the path, lead to the first of a series of waterfalls, the East Falls.

The East Falls are situated just downstream of the stone shed, so that from the path, falls and shed are viewed simultaneously. Both are located immediately downstream from the bridge, which provides another view of the two features. This arched stone bridge is constructed of rough-cut, coursed fieldstone. The road crosses the bridge to the meadows on the north side of the stream and draws the pedestrian in a northerly direction, rather than along the footpath, which follows the stream on the south side of the stream. Due to wear and erosion, large stones which once outlined the right-hand curve of the road are now in the middle of the road. The bridge and the grouping of trees mark the end of the corridor entrance space created by the width of the road and the height and canopy of the trees. The incidental quality that characterizes the beginning of the footpath may have been intended to create the impression that the path evolved through use rather than through design.

The Bridge to Three Bridge Falls

South of the bridge on the left are two small hills, the intersection of which forms a circular space enhanced by a framing of tulip poplars sited on the hills. The beeches located at the bridge provide a corresponding framing device on the north side of the road. However, the clarity of this focal point is somewhat compromised by the erosion of the path and the heavy growth of vegetation.

Choosing to take the footpath upstream, along the south side of the stream, instead of crossing the bridge, the pedestrian notices that the path becomes more enclosed. The area is overgrown and dark because of the dense grapevines and scrub growth. This sense of enclosure was not to have been part of the original design, although farther along the path large trees are utilized to create a canopy above. Again scrub vegetation obscures the view of the stream as well as the hillside. Intensive use has left the once gracefully curved path straight. Small stones were originally used to edge the south side of the path, some of which can now be found in the middle of the path. The path is narrow (3' wide), and the space is enclosed by three heights of vegetation: ground cover; eye-level or intermediate growth; and mature trees, 20' to 40' tall. These mature plantings filter sunlight into this portion of the park. The north side of the path is lined with trees blocking the view of the meadow on the far side of the stream. Only from a controlled location at the first of the Three Bridge Falls can the meadow be seen.

The first of Three Bridge Falls is located roughly 20' upstream from the bridge. The intact retaining wall on the north bank lines the falls and the bridge. The falls is designed so as to appear less architectural than the bridge. The stones are smaller and uncut, although they are uniform in size and laid in regular courses. As at the entrance, the masonry of the embankment wall makes the transition between the overt architectural design of the bridge and the naturalistic rustic design of the falls. In recent years, the flow of the stream has radically changed due to storm-water flooding that has left the diversion wall, which once directed the flow of water, exposed.

Above the second of the Three Bridge Falls, the view across the stream to the northern meadow is fully open. Because of this view, the parallel movement on the opposite side of the stream along the vehicular road is evident for the first time. The stream banks here are badly eroded, and the stream is often silted or full of pebbles and dead limbs. The curvilinear path to

the third of the Bridge Falls has been worn straight and narrow, no more than 3' wide. Although the path is straight, dense growth obscures any view except for what is immediately ahead and gives the path a tight, enclosed feeling.

At the third of the Three Bridge Falls, an S-curved path is marked by two large trees on the south side of the path. (All the falls are marked by curves in the path or specimen trees.) Also, to the south the slope of the hillside is more gradual. Beyond the curve, there is a clear view to Forsythia Hill and the hornbeam ellipse of the Dumbarton Oaks Gardens above--one of the few points at which the formal gardens can be seen. The view to the hillside is unobstructed, but there is no view of the stream even though at this point it is very close to the path.

Three Bridge Falls to Memorial Seating Area

The S-shaped path beyond Three Bridge Falls turns back toward the stream. Large stones appear randomly located in the stream. The southern hill is very close to the path, and its slope is steep and covered in ivy.

Because of the heavy overgrowth, much of which is at eye level, this part of the park had a wild or wooded character. Vines cover the stream, blocking any view, although immediately before the seating area, there is another path of light and openness. The third of the Three Bridge Falls, designed to appear particularly casual, had predicted this wilder area.

One progresses from this wild area to one of the most highly constructed parts of the park. Two stone seating areas flank the banks of the stream at the first of the Three Sisters Falls. The seat on the south side of the stream is a stone bench projecting from a stone wall, constructed of the same cut fieldstone as the bridge, and located immediately on the stream bank. The opposite seat is currently reached by a plank bridge (3' wide). This seating area is a three-sided, stone niche also facing the stream. The enclosing stone wall once contained a memorial plaque. The two wooden benches face one another, suggesting an area for conversation. From this niche there is a clear view to Forsythia Hill. The greater slope of the stream bed makes this falls, the first of the Three Sisters Falls, a much steeper drop. This drop is emphasized by stones placed in the stream bed below the falls which produce gentle rapids. This falls marks the beginning of a wooded glen of tall hemlocks which are located on the hillside rather than directly along the path. Other kinds of trees are located closer to the path.

Three Sisters Falls to West Laurel Falls

Beyond the first of Three Sisters Falls, the path curves to the left and ascends a small hill. However, changes in the path are clear because stones that once lined the path are now found crossing the path. The path then becomes straighter as it approaches the Laurel Pool and the third of Three Sisters Falls.

The third of the Three Sisters Falls is located just below the Laurel Pool. The retaining walls repeat the stacked stone pattern, although the walls on the south side are badly eroded. The remnants of the pool are heavily silted, forcing the stream into an oxbow configuration. This pool is a focal point, and the path stops in front of the pool before turning sharply left to follow

the curve of the pool. Because of the incline up to the pool, the pool is first visible at eye level. In contrast to the tunnel-like effect of the previous areas, the pool marks the beginning of the wooded area--open spaces under large shade trees which create a canopied, shadowy space. The opposite bank is covered in ivy, although scrub growth blocks any meadow views. The path curves around the pool into another open space where the service buildings of the mansion and walls of the garden above can be seen for the first time. This path is carved from the embankment. Large stones, used as a picturesque element, can be found in the path and differ from the border stones.

At the West Laurel Falls, another path, the Hazel Walk, constructed of slates, winds up to the greenhouse. This path, like the Forsythia Hill path, is also marked by a large tulip poplar. The rhododendron which covers the hillside is clearly visible and unobstructed by scrub vegetation. The path at this falls is almost level with the stream, and there is a ford, or a second crossing of the stream, at this point. Because of the minimum change in slope at this point, the falls are very gentle.

West Laurel Falls to Old Water Wheel Falls

From West Laurel Falls to Old Water Wheel Falls, the vegetation is more clearly defined with heavier growth of mature rhododendron and hemlocks. The path arcs away from the stream up the hill to a wooden bench in front of another one of the large tulip poplars that serve as landmarks along the path. Before descending the hill, the path curves back down toward the stream. The mature hemlocks and rhododendron continue to predominate in this wooded, canopied space. The three levels of vegetation are more sharply defined in this area than in others with rhododendron, ivy, and some of the large trees (hemlocks).

Old Water Wheel Falls to Clapper Bridge Falls

The ruins of a cast-iron water wheel are located in the V between two hillocks where the path begins to climb again to yet another high point. The hillside toward the house is not very steep at this point and is heavily wooded. Water Wheel Falls is located at another ford in the stream across from the water wheel, where a path crosses over into the meadows to the north. As this branch of the path crosses into the meadows, it is marked by a large walnut tree.

Beyond the Water Wheel Falls, the path once again curves southward, uphill to a tulip poplar beyond which on the left are a small pebbled stream and the grotto. The pebbled stream is formed into a series of falls, the only falls that empty into the stream. The falls are paved in a pebble mosaic set in concrete, repeating the pebble motif more formally developed in the gardens. From the grotto, just beyond, a spring sends a parallel stream of water via a wooden gutter (carved from a tree branch) into a small pool before emptying into the main stream. Surrounding the grotto is a band of rhododendron and ivy behind which is a hillside of tall hemlocks, accented with beeches, creating a heavily wooded, dark space. In contrast, the open meadow across the stream is fully visible. Stone steps which once led directly to the outbuildings of the mansion have been removed.

Beyond the grotto, the path descends down a small hill, approaching the stream at a diagonal. This path is aligned with the tulip poplar which marks the grotto and pebbled stream. The path turns slightly to the left at the stream where a stone loggia has been constructed of the same cut fieldstone used throughout the park. This loggia extends half the distance of the stream to Clapper Bridge Falls. Evidence remains of a timber arbor, which originally covered the stone seat and the path, although it is now in ruins. This loggia is not visible until one is immediately upon it. However, the stream and first of Clapper Falls are clearly visible from the pebbled stream. The path continues along the top of the retaining wall to Clapper Bridge Falls. (It is not clear whether this was part of the original design, or is the result of the erosion of the path which abutted the wall.) At the falls, the path is so badly eroded that the path is actually 1' to 2' below the original path level. This whole area is both linear and architectonic with the long stone bench, the loggia and long embankment wall. Two falls are visible, although the stream is very shallow. The shallowness of the stream creates an open view of the meadow. In contrast, the maturity of the rhododendron on the south hill blocks much of the uphill view.

Clapper Falls to Jungle Falls

At Clapper Bridge Falls, which is the last of the fords in the stream, the path crosses northward into the lower meadow. On the south side, the area beyond Clapper Bridge Falls is now blocked by heavy bamboo growth. The path is virtually obscured because of this bamboo density. The clearing allows for a distinct view of the lower meadow. At this point, where the path ends, there has been much alteration of the path and much erosion. As a result, the Three Meadows Falls and Jungle Falls must be viewed from the meadow path (when they are visible at all). After the path crosses onto the meadow side, the grapevine growth becomes so dense that the stream is not visible except at points where use (to gain access to the falls) has worn a path. The Jungle Falls are also located in this dense, open area of grapevine, where the lower path along the stream is totally obscured and blocked. To the west looms the Safeway store, located on Wisconsin Avenue, and to the east is a meadow blocked by trees and vines.

Beyond the last of the Jungle Falls, the path once again splits, with the lower path following the stream as it makes a wide loop westward. The left-hand, or lower path, is so obstructed that the pedestrian would not necessarily be aware that the path had ever existed. At the fork, the spaces change dramatically. The path is wide (4' to 5') and unobstructed, although the space feels enclosed, because of the overhead canopy of trees and mature rhododendron. There is a sharp delineation between the three heights of vegetation. The ground is very level, and the path is located northeast of the stream as it curves westward. Beyond the point where the two forks of the path converge, a culvert, originating from the parking lot of the former Page Building, is visible. Forming the headwater of the stream, a second culvert, which carries the flow from the original springs (now covered by fill) as well as the runoff from the Naval Observatory parking lots and elsewhere, is visible just to the northwest.

The Islet and the Oak Grove

The Islet is a teardrop-shaped "island" in the creek created by Beatrix Farrand with a new S-shaped channel. A sweeping curved 4'-high rock retaining wall along the path-side bank and the creek render the visually close Islet inaccessible. The Islet area is shrouded in the dense

shade of dark evergreen pines, hemlocks, rhododendrons and mountain laurels. At the Islet, one has a choice of continuing north or turning east (right).

The path on the north side of the creek follows the creek upstream a short distance, quickly narrows, leaves the evergreens, and curves away from the creek gradually uphill to the northeast through a deciduous forest. Heavy timber steps closely spaced in a steep stretch are followed by broad stone steps as one enters an old oak grove on top of a ridge. From this old grove of large oak trees, two paths diverge. The southeasterly one leads downhill through a deciduous forest to the upper end of the road; the southerly one leads downhill through a series of small glades, which in spring are profuse with yellow narcissus and grape hyacinth, at the north end of the West Glade.

The Animal Graveyard and West Glade

If the main path east from the Islet is chosen, one climbs steeply uphill from the creek, over a series of heavy timber steps, out of the evergreens and through a deciduous forest. After a short distance, one reaches the north end of the West Glade. At the forest meadow edge on the north side of the path is the Animal Graveyard, which is marked by scattered 1' high gravestones inscribed with pets' names and dates from the 1920s and 1930s. When this was a private estate, the Animal Graveyard was graced with a bronze statue of a wood nymph and unicorn, which, even before the park was separated from the gardens, had to be moved because of vandalism and is now located in the garden off the Music Room at the mansion.

The West Glade affords a long vista south from the Animal Graveyard to the Arbor area. Forming a long, narrow meadow running north-south with a slight slope to the south, the West Glade is framed by deciduous forest cover which screens it from the creek to the west, and from the old road to the east. Without the wood nymph and unicorn statue, the north end of the West Glade lacks a focal element.

Old Road and Stone Benches

Crossing the north end of the West Glade, one reaches the old road with its welcome classical cast-stone bench. The old road leads back to the Stone Bridge, past the east side of the West Glade, and the north side of the stream. Along this old road are two more classical benches, as well as vistas of the Meadow, the Laurel Pool, several waterfalls, the East Glade, the Stone Bridge, and the old Stone Shed.

The Meadows

Another way back is to cross the old road and continue east up a grassy hillside skirting the north edge of the Meadows. The Meadows are a series of south-facing grassy slopes, bounded by the road and the riparian strip along the creek to the south, and old oak groves and young deciduous forest on the ridgeline to the north. The north edge of the meadows affords the only broad panoramic views in the park, with the terraced formal gardens of Dumbarton Oaks rising beyond the creek. The meadows, which were divided into two compartments by the plantings of Beatrix Farrand, convey a strong sense of visual enclosure. The pastoral meadows,

with their edges enhanced by plantings of trees with spring flowers and fall colors, provide a contrast to the sylvan glen along the stream.

Before the eighteenth century, the park and its environs were heavily forested; then, historical settlement cleared the forest for pasture; later, oak groves returned to the hilltops in the nineteenth century. Beatrix Farrand incorporated historical landscape settlement patterns into her early twentieth-century landscape design, following the English pastoral landscape tradition. After fifty years of management of this designed landscape as a park, the forest once again is reaching out from the old oak groves to engulf the pastoral meadows.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Drawings and Maps:

1. Maps and Drawings from the Archives of the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library, Washington, DC.

Bliss Valley Survey, James Berrall, Engineer. 1"=20'. March 1926. Print, blue on white of valley, shows trees, contours, old road, original stream location, existing conditions including rock outcroppings and waterfalls, existing buildings and foundations, and proposed dams and ponds. A-1.11.

The Oaks--Stream, James Berrall, Engineer. December 20, 1926. Horizontal and vertical scale 1"=10'. V-1.01.

Stone Bridge. Beatrix Farrand sketch for Robert Woods Bliss. Alternatives b, c, and d are not attributed to Farrand. 1/8"=1'. No date. Q-2.04(a).

Forsythia Walk Gate to Dumbarton Oaks Park. No scale. August 28, 1939. B-3.71(a).

Seat for Wilderness--R. W. Bliss Estate, Washington, D.C., signed Beatrix Farrand, Landscape Gardener. 3/4"=1'. No date. B-3.04.

R. W. Bliss Estate: Grading Plan for Wood Road at Bridge, with 1' contours. 1/8"=1'. December 1926. Q-3.01.

Watercolor by Ernest Clegg. 1935. Hanging over fireplace in music room of Dumbarton Oaks. Shows the openness of the hillside leading down toward the stream and the transition between the gardens and pastoral area as originally planned. Copy included in Appendix A.

2. Maps from the National Archives, Cartographic Division, Alexandria, Virginia.

Map of Property of Robert Woods Bliss, Esq., Showing Physical Features. Beatrix Farrand, landscape gardener, and James Berrall, civil engineer. Shows waterfalls, ponds, loggia, paths, and Clifton Hill with its horseback-riding trails and animal cemetery. Served as the basis for HABS sheet 3. 1"=40'. November 1, 1932. RG69.637-7-3, 863/80,007.

Dumbarton Oaks Park. Plant Survey with Inventory, National Park Service, National Capital Region. 1966. RG69.637-21, 863/80,036.

3. Relevant U.S. Geological Survey maps:

Washington, West Quadrangle. 1"=400': 1886, 1922, 1941, 1983.

B. Unpublished sources:

College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley. Documents Collection, Beatrix Jones Farrand Files.

Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library, Washington, DC. Letters, maps, drawings, books. (DOGL)

New York Historical Society Collections, New York City. McKim, Mead and White collection, Bliss file. Letters, photographs, drawings. (NYHS)

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1460 (Dumbarton Oaks. Letters. (NPS)

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region. Files and microfiche. (NCR)

U.S. National Archives, Cartographic Division, Alexandria, VA. Maps and drawings.

C. Published sources:

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks. ed. Diane Kostial McGuire. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1980.

Beatrix Farrand wrote The Plant Book in 1941, the year following the donation of the mansion and gardens to Harvard University, and the park to the National Park Service. It describes the original intent and maintenance procedures for each of the formal gardens. Because there is no such book for the park, letters included in Appendix A of this report must serve as a substitute.

Beatrix Jones Farrand: Fifty Years of American Landscape Architecture. ed. Diane Kostial McGuire and Lois Fern. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982.

This collection of papers was presented at the Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium the History of Landscape Architecture (no. VIII). Of particular interest to the study of the park are: "Beatrix Farrand's Contribution to the Art of Landscape Architecture" by Diana Kostial McGuire and "Beatrix Farrand at Dumbarton Oaks: The Design Process of a Garden" by Diana Balmori.

Balmori, Diana, Diane Kostial McGuire, and Eleanor McPeck. Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses. Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1985.

Published in connection with a major exhibition of Beatrix Farrand's work organized by Leslie Close, director, American Garden History Program of Wave Hill, the Bronx, New York City. Of particular interest to the study of the park

are: "Plants and Planting Design" by Diane Kostial McGuire and "Campus Work and Public Landscapes" by Diana Balmori.

Bliss, Mildred B. "An Attempted Evocation of a Personality," Landscape Architecture (Summer 1959): 218, 223.

Jekyll, Gertrude. On Gardening. ed. Elizabeth Lawrence. New York: Vintage Books, 1964.

Lewis, R. W. B. Edith Wharton: A Biography. New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. ed. Harper Colophon, 1977.

Masson, Georgina. Dumbarton Oaks: A Guide to the Gardens. Washington: Trustees for Harvard University, 1968.

Newton, Norman T. Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

Patterson, Robert W. "Beatrix Farrand, 1872-1959: An Appreciation of a Great Landscape Gardener." Landscape Architecture (Summer 1959): 216, 217, 218.

Platt, Charles A. Italian Gardens. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894.

Salon, Marlene. "Beatrix Jones Farrand: Pioneer in Gilt-Edged Gardens." Landscape Architecture (January 1977): 76.

Wharton, Edith. Italian Villas and Their Gardens. New York: Century, 1902; repr. New York: Da Capo, 1976.

Perceptive view of Italian villa gardens by Beatrix Farrand's aunt and close friend.

D. Persons Interviewed:

Smith, Donald, superintendent of gardens and grounds, Dumbarton Oaks. Walk and talk on 11 November 1988.

The following National Park Service personnel have been previously associated with the direction and maintenance of Dumbarton Oaks Park and were interviewed by telephone:

Robert Bruce
Robert Ford
Elmer Jones
David Newman
Keith Polhemus
Barton Truesdell
James Whalen
Robert Whistler

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Buildings Survey, a division of the National Park Service led by Robert J. Kapsch, chief, conducted the Dumbarton Oaks Park recording project as part of an on-going effort to create standards for documenting historic landscapes. Sponsored by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service, this project is intended specifically to serve as a model in the documentation of naturalistic landscapes. Paul D. Dolinsky, HABS principal architect, served as project leader.

The project was conducted over a two-year period beginning in summer 1988. The initial phase included a site analysis and existing conditions report, which consisted of both graphic representations of such features as slope, vegetation, and views and written descriptions. This phase was undertaken by Denise Bradley, landscape architect, and Frances Alexander, historian. HABS photographer Jack Boucher photographed the park during the same summer. Whenever possible, photographs were shot from locations duplicating those of the earlier photographs described in the Index of Photographs to facilitate a comparison between the state of the park during the 1930s and today.

The second phase of documentation was undertaken in 1989. Measured drawings were produced under the direction of project supervisor Andrew Wenchel, landscape architect, ASLA. Other team members were: Steve Ashworth, landscape architect, Thomas Forde, architect, and Jakub Zemla, landscape architect from Poland. Jon David Kollitz, a student of landscape architecture, joined the team for the second half of the summer. The written data were compiled and written by Marion K. Schlefer, with the exception of Part II. Descriptive Information, which was compiled and written by Frances Alexander, and edited by Marion K. Schlefer and Andrew Wenchel. This report was edited in the HABS office by Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Senior Historian, 1992-94.

APPENDIX A

Beatrix Farrand to Mildred Woods Bliss, 24, 25 July 1922. From the Archives of the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library.

Notes made during conference at Dumbarton Oaks, 24 November 1941. From National Park Service Archives, 1460 Dumbarton Oaks.

Harry T. Thompson, Memorandum for the Files, "Inspection of Dumbarton Oaks November 20, 1942," 21 November 1942. From National Park Service Archives, 1460 Dumbarton Oaks.

Beatrix Farrand to Harry Thompson, 21 November 1942. From National Park Service Archives, 1460 Dumbarton Oaks.

Beatrix Farrand to Harry T. Thompson, 29 March 1943. From National Park Service Archives, 1460 Dumbarton Oaks.

Photocopy of photographs of watercolor painted by Ernest Clegg, 1935, hanging over fireplace in Music Room of Dumbarton Oaks.

THE OAKS.

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, June 24, 25, 1922.

The Oaks offers opportunities for development on so many different lines that it is difficult to know which to emphasize most strongly in the beginning. For purposes of convenience, therefore, the various sections will be discussed in their relation to the house and its approaches, beginning with the entrance on R Street and the border plantations and the house and its immediate surroundings and leaving the development of the ravines and brook to be spoken of under another heading.

It would seem as though the whole street front section of the place should be treated from the point of view of some of the large, ample, old, half city, half country houses, which one associates with certain districts in England and France and to a certain extent in our own south. The house is not quite a country house, nor is it in the least a town building. Its proportions are so harmonious and its horizontal and vertical lines so strong and well considered that it imposes a treatment as carefully thought out in the planting. The whole feeling of the entrance front of the house should be one to be gained through easy flowing lines, dark masses of foliage, considered quite as much from the point of view of winter effect as summer space and quietness. It would seem as though no, so-called, ornamental planting should be attempted and that the forms and textures should be all that are needed to give the feeling of dignity and simplicity which the lines of the building themselves demand.

While in no way should the planting on R Street look as though it were intended to close out people's view of the place, it should in effect do this, but by giving them interesting and pretty plants to look at, with occasional calculated glimpses of the place, arranged so that they will not rake the windows and gardens, the passersby will not feel crudely excluded and yet additional privacy will be secured for the owners of The Oaks.

On a separate sheet a tentative list is given of the plants to be used for the R Street border plantation. The evergreens ~~whether~~ coniferous or broad-leaved, ~~being~~ used as the backbone of the plantation, the north outline of which should be irregular and worked out to suit the needs of screening heavily where more screening is needed and lighter where there is already a good mass of protection. Against this main planting should be added a few single flowering trees or a group of shrubs here or there, bearing in mind, however, that the interruption of the evergreen border by too many so-called incidents of planting will tend to take away from its dignity without giving enough variety to make it worth while.

Probably the heaviest mass of large plants will be required on the line between the front door and the street running south from the west entrance.

As a protective fence along the south front, it is suggested to try and keep the present stone retaining wall if it can be made to last and adapting an iron fence to its top which could be used in modified design along the whole south front, taking, for instance, the good eighteenth century model of the dart picket or halberd picket. The design for these might be determined later as it may be a possible convenience to the border planting to be able to do this, ~~particularly~~ from the R Street front, and a permanent fence might be troublesome to deal with. However, the permanent fence might be essential if thefts of plants are likely. No planting should be countenanced which in any way would distract ones attention from the simple and beautiful lines of the grades and the magnificent oak trees which surround the house. It is, therefore, suggested that the planting of this south front of the house be in a sense as permanant, and, if one may so say, impersonal, as possible, leaving the more delicate arrangements to serve as attractive objects for the walks and paths which will some day be worked out on the north slopes.

A screen of fairly large evergreens, box yews, or holly, will have to be used on the southwest corner of the house in order to hide the service entrance from the front. The exact position of these different plantations is difficult to determine academically, and the most important groups should be placed on the ground as alterations of grade, root space and exact angle of vision should be the controlling factors, rather than their exact position upon a planting plan.

For the south front of the house, a pair of large Buxus suffruticosa , approximately four to five feet high and if possible about six to eight feet in diameter, will probably be the best plants to use for the spaces on either side of the front steps, placing the center of the plant ~~in~~ the space between the pairs of windows. This will allow plenty of light to come in to the basement windows and yet will partially mask them. A splash of Hedra helix dentata (the large-leaved English ivy) should be planted on both east and west wings; On the east wing between the east library windows and on the west wing west of the pantry window. Another plant of ivy of the palmata variety (a small-leaved sort) will give a different texture and yet an evergreen effect if set out on the wall west of the west dining room window. A white jasmine might look well on the angle east of the east salon window. Underneath the west library window and near the pantry window a group of flat and fat dwarf English yew (Taxus baccata var. repandens) will make a round-headed and dark-colored group somewhat balancing the larger round-headed group which the two large box plants will make on either

side of the main entrance.

It is possible that clipped wall shrubs might add to the appearance of the front of the house, but the writer feels that the proportions are so good that little should be done until after experiment has been made as to exactly where the accents are needed.

A s the service road is likely to be brought in from the side street and approaching the house at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees, it will be by its position fairly sell screened from the front and only an occasional tree or shrub will be needed to hide it completely.

The north front of the house with its vista, cedar edged, may be developed in so many different attractive ways that it is difficult not to be distracted. Clearly a long pool would be beautiful in spring and autumn. The only question is whether it would have the same charm in winter and if the pool could be kept full in winter or whether it would mean a studied decoration for an empty concrete tank. Obviously, however, a large white maple tree is required on the east side of the vista to balance the large tulip tree on the northwest angle. There is also a possibility that a plant of Magnolia grandiflora (the evergreen Magnolia) would be well-placed at the inner angles of the vista where they would be seen in winter even if the western one was hidden by the horse chestnut in summer. As the north court of the house is extremely successful in its proportion and design, the planting should also be carefully studied so that it shall balance and the small irregularities in design concealed by planting. For instance, the runway on the west side of the court might well be hidden by a square ivy covered railing simulating a hedge and on the east side of the court a real hedge could be planted of approximately the same dimension and in front of both the real and imaginary hedge separate plants could be set at regular spaces. A gain, the treatment of the wall on the north of the house should be carefully studied as here the writer is convinced that the clipped evergreen thorn, or other rough, bushy wall-shrub such as are used in England, largely evergreen in character, would give good shadow and pleasant interruption to the surface of the brick without spoiling the proportions of the building.

No definite suggestion is made with regard to the planting under the north gallery as it is felt that this is one of the most important pieces of planting to be done, requiring both delicacy and solidity of treatment and where exactly the right material should be used to get a continuous effect without coarseness or monotony. It is possible that a combination of Japanese Andromedas and A belia might be used.

On the northeast corner of the house two magnificent oak trees inclosed by the low brick wall inevitably suggest the making of a green garden which would in a sense be a part of the rooms looking out on it. The east wall of the library is the hardest part of the planting of this scheme. A heavy mass of evergreen foilage is required in the southwest angle. This may be obtained in one of two or three ways, either by planting a temporary large cedar tree which shall be taken out later when the wall covering develops, or by planting and patiently waiting for a wall covering of heavy texture such as the large-leaved ivy or the evergreen magnolia pinned to the wall as it is so often grown in England, or another evergreen wall-shrub of heavy foilage which should be kept clipped. The main carpet of the green garden should be, in the writer's opinion, a small-leaved plant with evergreen foilage, such as the periwinkle (Vinca minor), using both its blue and white varieties. The main, central plot had probably better be of one plant, or possibly interrupted, if there is danger of monotony, by one or two evergreen Azaleas or Andromedas. The borders should, however, be somewhat varied and plants of coarser leaf could be used, such as Pachysandra, Hypericum, Berberis, repens etc. Groups of small bulbs might be planted among the vinca or other ground cover in order to give early flower and on the east side of the garden shade-loving plants, such as some of the evergreen ferns and early spring flowering varieties, could be used in combination with Christmas roses, Tiarella (foam flower), Galax, Shortia and Vancouveria. There should not be much planting on the brick wall, and whatever is used should be very fine in leaf, as every effort should be made to exaggerate the already large scale of the oak, by making the surrounding plants very fine and delicate in foilage and growth. The use of too much Evonymus is not advised as it will make rather a bristly ground cover. It may be useful in certain spots where just this effect is required on the house or garden wall.

The exact solution for the steps from the east windows of the music room must be arrived at before a decision can be reached as to the planting of this section. The terrace which was spoken of may work out conveniently as the present steps seem to make an awkward pocket approach from the back of the corridor leading to the Orangery. The north side of the Orangery will naturally be flagged as it will be a pleasant place to sit on hot sunny mornings. It is, therefore, doubtful whether it will be possible to continue the border of evergreen ferns along the Orangery wall. This would, however, be attractive if they would not be too much damaged by the wear and tear of chairs and tables being pushed against them. The south side of the Orangery, with its great Magnolia, should be planted with some evergreen ground cover, such as the hybrid St. John's Wort (hypericum Moserianum) with snow drops and an early iris planted through it. Probably

the list of plants already suggested for the Orangery can materially be added to after thinking and seeing what is used for the same purpose abroad. Certainly two more names should be added, the blue Solanum capensis and the orange-colored streptosolen Jamesori. The materials to be used in the Orangery will have to be renewed and replaced from time to time when they are out of bloom or unattractive, and in order that a succession of plants may be kept in good condition it will be necessary to construct quite a large so-called pit in which these plants can be wintered and kept in the approximate temperature which will be used for the Orangery. Standard wisterias will also be attractive to force and an occasional climbing rose in a tub or early daphne or cherry will make a pleasant change without entailing much trouble or expense. The pit to be constructed should be not smaller in floor area than the Orangery itself, and, if possible, it should be larger in order to allow space for replenishment, as much of its usefulness will be as an overflow from the Orangery and its reservoir. As it is unlikely that all of the plants for the Orangery can be obtained at short notice, it will probably be time enough to start the pit next autumn or winter. In the meantime, Gray might look for the plants needed and report as to what he finds and in what condition. A duplicate list of the Orangery list is sent in order that Gray may have the list of materials wanted.

The planting around the tennis court should be carefully studied. It is not quite clear whether it had better be in the main deciduous or evergreen in character. As it will not be conspicuously in view from the house, at any rate at present, it may be advisable to make the main part of it deciduous, using the heavy stone walls as backgrounds for fine climbers such as roses, clementis, jasmine etc., and keeping the plantations to the varieties of spring and autumn flowering and fruiting plants.

The east front of the house really presents the hardest problem at present as the grading must be restudied before it can be made a satisfactory platform for the house. The various suggestions as for shortening up the terraces in different directions were made verbally and can hardly be more crystalized until studied immediately on the plan. The more the problem is considered, however, the more it seems clear that the rose garden must be practically flat in appearance and that a large stone wall on its west side, if properly designed, would make a considerable part of its charm. The wall and steps, while not in any way ambitious or pretentious in scheme, could be a vital part of the plan and if made of fairly large rough stone, perhaps buttressed as many of the old stone walls are and simple in parapet, whether of iron, or stone, or hedged, it would hardly give the dressed-up appearance so repellent in many modern gardens.

The lower herbaceous garden should, in the writers mind, be

a very much less prim design than the rose garden, with considerable masses of perennials, none of them large in size, but giving a sort of general friendly mixture of color and form and entirely different in type from the upper level. A list of some of the different flowers suggested for the herbaceous garden is also enclosed and tentative suggestions for some of the groupings.

The pool below the herbaceous garden, with its grassy seats and slopes may be made an unusual frame for an out-of-doors picture. It is so entirely romantic in type that all sorts of plants of the weeping-willowish variety will be appropriate, but as so much of its treatment must be a subject for later study any suggestions with regard to its future development are withheld for the present.

The whole scheme for the north slopes of the property should properly be studied from the ground itself rather than from any plan, as the contours and expressions of the ground will control the plantations more strongly than any other feature. The brook certainly could be widened and dammed up at various points and used as a mirror in which to reflect large plants of azaleas and iris, or overhanging dark masses of hemlock, with water-loving plants growing on their still surface, and walks arranged on the different levels so that the plantations could be seen from above as well as from their own level. It is hoped that one ravine could be given over to a mass of azaleas, another to a plantation of Magnolias and crabs, and that a walk be arranged of the different varieties of lilac following the east boundary and in general making the old fashioned "circle walk" which was so usually a part of every eighteenth century design. It is also hoped that a part of the grounds could be developed as a "Wilderness" where hollies, yews, ivies and spring flowering Magnolias and winter flowering shrubs would make an attractive walk to be followed in winter. Another part of the grounds should have a primrose garden, possibly surrounded by a nut walk. A large mass of forsythia planted on one of the hillsides and in combination with the blue bung wort and daffodils will be attractive at its own moment, and in the writer's mind the development of the north part of the place should be on the lines of a series of interesting plantations, each thought out for a certain season, and easily reached by a good walk and yet not conspicuously in view when it was not at its best.

Obviously the place for the big kitchen garden is in the area between the present gardener's house and the east terrace. The survey shows it to be the only approximately level part of the ground and there is no reason why it should not be worked attractively into the scheme of walks leading from the house around the boundaries. The cutting garden should be thought out as a part of this scheme and espaliered and cordon, small fruit and large, should be planted on either side of the walks and also on the hillsides

sloping down from the terraces to the garden. This would seem to tie the whole scheme of house, terrace and green garden, swimming pool and kitchen garden, into a unit.

Two suggestions are made for consideration. The first, that an oak rift paling be used on Lover's Lane in combination with the present retaining wall where the wall is needed. The paling could be spaced so that intervals would show glimpses of the place without making it a part of the public highway.

These notes should not be considered as more than suggestions and jottings, the result of only a few hours acquaintance with the Oaks and are subject to alteration and change of mind on the owners and designers part.

The orangery - garden - planting list follow to-morrow —

B.F.

Mrs. Bliss, - June 25, 1922.

Plants for R. Street Plantation Border.

Magnolia foetida (grandiflora)
Ilex aquifolium, English Holly,
" opaca American "
Buxus arborescens, Box, tall,
Cedrus Libani, Cedar of Lebanon,
Taxus baccata, English Yew,
" cuspidata, Japanese "
Tsuga caroliniana, Hemlock C
" Sieboldii " Jap.
" Canadensis, " Northern
Magnolia conspicua, Magnolia, White,
" glauca, Swamp "
Kalmia latifolia, Mt. Laurel,
Rhododendron, only white and pale pink,
use sparingly.
Cotoneasters in variety, Leucothoe,
Gaultheria Shallon
Crataegus pyracantha,
Osmanthus ilicifolia,
Berberis aquifolium, &c.

Plants for Orangery.

Nerium Oleander
Myrtus communis
Rhychospermum
Lemon Verbena
Azalea - single,
Camellia, single,
Oranges in variety,
Hibiscus,
Pomegranate,
Humea elegans,
Portugal laurel,
Acacias in var.
White crape murtle,
Pittosporum,
Rose Lamarque & Marechal Niel,
Amaryllis,
Lilies in Tubs.

[Transcribed from poor copy by HABS 1992]

Notes made during conference at Dumbarton Oaks -- November 24, 1941

Present: Director Drury, Mrs. Farrand, Mr. Thacher, Mr. Root.

***

Protect planting of Scotch broom on hillside that has been cut too short in mowing.

Plant 150 primulas each year if possible, to maintain at least one of the beds along the brook.

Surface with gravel the turf paths in woods that are showing wear or erosion.

Select sites for 3 stone benches owned by Bliss Estate, if their use in the park is considered appropriate. Mr. Brice will indicate sites suggested by Mrs. Farrand.

Study perennial beds with Mr. Brice and decide if any should be abandoned. If so, decide which treatment of the areas is most preferable, seeding to grass, ground cover, or planting of ferns.

Recent planting of laurel by National Capital Parks commended by Mrs. Farrand, who hopes that such planting may be continued.

Mrs. Farrand requested permission to move some oak trees planted by Mr. Bliss in the park area to various locations about the mansion. Suggested by Mr. Root that trees desired be tagged so that the effect of their loss may be determined before a decision is made regarding their removal.

Pools along brook should be cleaned occasionally. They were last cleaned two years ago, and are now badly silted. Cleaning every 3 years would be desirable, and oftener if possible. If thorough cleaning of pools is too expensive, cleaning to original shore lines, but to a partial depth would produce a pleasing effect.

Representatives of National Capital Parks to confer with Mr. Brice, Superintendent of Grounds at Bliss Mansion, regarding staked out location of walk extensions proposed by Mrs. Ferrand. Suggested that steps be made of double railroad ties with single tie for riser pegged in place. Walk on hillside to be retained by single row of field stone and made inconspicuous. National Capital Parks to make estimate of cost of the walk extension, omitting cost of supervision which will be furnished by the Bliss Estate.

Mr. Thacher requested attendance figures for Dumbarton Oaks Park.

***

1460 Dumbarton Oaks.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS
WASHINGTON

November 21, 1942.

MEMORANDUM for the Files.

Re: Inspection of Dumbarton Oaks,
November 20, 1942.

This will serve to record that on Friday, November 20, I met Mrs. Beatrix Farrand and Mr. Robert Bliss,. the donor of Dumbarton Oaks, at the Dumbarton Oaks area to discuss the proposed storm sewer which the District plans to build through the valley, and the planting and maintenance program for the area as a whole.

STEPS:

There is a flight of sandstone steps that parallels the Italian-esque pebble-lined channel, which at one time served as a connection between the house and the mill wheel located next to the brook. Since the Bliss estate has been divided into two units, the enclosure separating the Harvard unit from the Park Service unit has been closed and the steps no longer function, other than to serve as a blind alley to visitors using the Dumbarton Oaks Park. Mrs. Farrand and Mr. Bliss suggested that these steps be removed. I concurred in this suggestion and advised them that the Service would remove them as soon as this can conveniently be done.

DEAD TREE:

The large dead oak tree that is now being removed from the hillside in the upper regions of the park, was requested by Mr. Bliss for firewood. Mr. Bryce suggested that he would remove the tree and cut it into firewood for Mr. Bliss with our permission. I stated that this was quite agreeable to us.

POOLS:

It was pointed out that a considerable yardage of silt, sand, and pebbles which have been deposited in the pools by silting operations, have been shoveled out on the banks, resulting in a considerable diminishing of their original size. Mrs. Farrand suggested that with our permission, Mr. Bryce would indicate by a series of small stakes the location of the original pool edge, if we could arrange to remove this fill material and restore the pools to something like their original shape. It was obvious that a considerable amount of silt has also been shoveled up from the brook on to the banks. This material might also be removed at some later date.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS
WASHINGTON

WILLOW TREE:

A small weeping willow has been planted next to the largest pool on the north bank. This willow tree should be removed.

REMOVAL OF DEAD TREES AND SHRUBS:

Mrs. Farrand and Mr. Bryce are either to place or mark with tie-rags a few small trees and shrubs, which in Mrs. Farrand's opinion, should be removed. It was agreed that this would be satisfactory, and that we would consider the removal of these trees and shrubs so marked as soon as time can be found to do so.

In reviewing with Mrs. Farrand and Mr. Bliss the list of plant material - leucothoe, kalmia, rhododendrons, azalea's, and vinca recently ordered for Dumbarton Oaks, it was Mrs. Farrand's view that to plant as many of the above items would be entirely excessive.

It was her thought that not more than 25 percent of this material should be used as plant replacement. It was also her view that she would prefer to see certain areas that have been previously devoted to cowslips, Japanese iris, trillium in variety, and selected primula be replaced with material of this kind. She is to put her recommendations in this regard in writing and send it to this Office, with the understanding that we will consider substituting the plants which have already been ordered on November 20, 1942, with a much less expensive list of plant material such as she will suggest.

In this connection it is my thought that we might utilize the material in large, that has been ordered for Dumbarton Oaks, as supplemental planting on the south bank of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway now undergoing grading operations.

Harry T. Thompson,
Chief - Planning Division.

The sewer location was quite satisfactory to Both Mr. Bliss and Mrs. Farrand.

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GEORGETOWN, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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November 21, 1942.

Mr. Harry Thompson, Landscape Architect,
National Park Service,
North Interior Building, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

It was doubtless as much of a relief to you as it was to me to find that the replacement list which we thought was needed for the Dumbarton Oaks Park was far smaller than we had anticipated. Your list, which you kindly lent me, is repeated to you with the suggested quantities on the left hand side of the column, and the actually needed quantities in parentheses at the right hand side of the column.

100	Leucothoe Catesbaeii	18/24"	(25)
300	Kalmia latifolia	2-1/2 ft.	(25)
200	Rhododendron maximum	2-2-1/2 ft.	(none)
200	Azalea arborescens	"	(25)
100	" viscosa	"	(25)
5000	Vinca minor	from 2" pots	(none)

Mr. Bryce and I find that about 50 Azalea calendulacea 18/24" could wisely be used at the upper end of the brook where it emerges from the wood, to fatten out an old plantation.

The suggested replacements in your list total about $1550.00 so that a very material saving can be made by ordering the following list of herbaceous material which is really needed. As you thought it might be of use to indicate possible sources of material, I have put on the right hand side of the list the nurseries where this material should be available.

50 Iris Sibirica blue - Wayside Nurseries, Mentor, Ohio

(There is a considerable quantity of Iris Sibirica in the lowland between the north side of the stream and the road which could be divided. The groups start north of the Laurel Pool and run west, approximately, as far as the line of trees. By dividing these clumps the amount of plants available should be nearly quadrupled.)

1000-1250 Primula polyanthus — a good strain is the Munstead.

(At the moment I am not sure where this can be found in such large quantities. I suggest trying the Wayside Nurseries, or possibly making an arrangement with a local grower, such as Pingle in Pittsville, Md., to grow you plants which he could deliver either next

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GEORGETOWN, WASHINGTON, D. C.

(...Spring, or in the early Autumn, from 2" or 3" pots. Wayside Nurseries list the Munstead strain mixed - which is what we prefer - and quotes it at $20.00 per Hundred).

200 Trillium grandiflorum for planting in groups in shady or moist places near the path edges, perhaps below the Laurels, opposite the Pool and following the path over to the old water-wheel.

(Wayside Nurseries list this plant at $12.00 per Hundred.)

50 Camassia esculenta

(This is listed by Hosea Waterer at $4.00 per hundred)

100 Mertensia Virginica. This plant should be set out in small groups north of the Laurel Pool where, in former years, it interrupted groups of White Narcissus Poeticus Pheasant's Eye.

(This is listed by Wayside at $15.00 per Hundred)

200 Aspidium acrostichoides (Christmas Fern)

(Listed by Wayside at $20.00 per hundred)

(These are needed to replace many clumps which have been drowned in the floods and covered with the extra fill.)

25 Struthiopteris germanica (Ostrich Fern)

(Listed by Wayside at $20.00 per hundred)

(This is needed to replace some that were lost in the floods near the Arbor and in occasional spots west of the Laurel Pool.)

It will doubtless be as much of a relief to you as to us to find how much smaller our needs are than we thought. It will also help you and Mr. Stevens as Mr. Bryce says he will be very glad to collaborate with Mr. Stevens in placing the plants when they arrive. You will remember also that Mr. Bryce offered to stake out with Mr. Stevens the old lines of the pools which have been obliterated by recent floods.

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GEORGETOWN, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Mr. Harry Thomson - Page 3. November 21, 1942.

Didn't we agree that there was too much Leucothoe along the stream side and that much of it might well be eliminated? The clumps have been set out in rather too heavy groups and some of these could well be spared for other places. Some of these clumps, as you will notice, were on filled ground and will normally go out when the stream side resumes its old outline.

It was nice of you to say that we might have the wood from the old oak tree that has fallen on the Clifton Hill. As fire wood is difficult to get in these days it will come in very handy.

A letter will come to you later from California reminding you of various matters we discussed as to the general design and planting of the stream-side and also of your kind suggestion that we might take the stepping stones from the walk leading to the Spring from the wire fence making the park boundary northwest of the greenhouse.

Looking forward to seeing you next Spring and hoping this letter may be of some use in the rehabilitation of the too much flooded parkside, I am

Yours sincerely,

Beatrix Farrand

After December first - address will be

Valley Club of Montecito
Box 1140
Santa Barbara
California

The Valley Club of Montecito
Santa Barbara, California
March 29, 1943.

Mr. Harry T. Thompson
Chief, Planning Division
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Capitol Parks
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Let us hope that the old proverb of much water having run under the bridge will not be true of the Dumbarton Oaks stream, as we certainly had enough floods and washouts last summer and autumn to satisfy the most dry-minded individual.

It has been an unconsciounably long time since your letter of December 30th reached me here, and I am now on the verge of going east, and look forward to the possibility of meeting you at Dumbarton Oaks park sometime in early April. I hope and expect to be staying at Dumbarton Oaks (thanks to Mr. John Thacher's kindness) from Saturday, April 10th, until the following Wednesday or Thursday. Perhaps we could again meet and review the situation and see what you think is likely for the spring and summer work and how it can best be organized.

As you know (and as I think you approve) the planting along the Dumbarton Oaks stream side was planned to be rather small in scale and entirely simple in all its arrangements. Mr. and Mrs. Bliss and I felt, in designing the rhododendron covered hillside north of the greenhouse, that we provided for all the rhododendron planting which this neighborhood could absorb, with its occasional hemlock trees mixed into the planting. To the east of this rhododendron hillside, a group or two of laurels were planted on the north facing slopes, and they have not been particularly successful so that these slopes south of the largest pool might well be reorganized in their planting, and some of the dry hillside loving azaleas substituted for the kalmias, which have not been too happy. The kalmias seem to be doing better in the hollow of the hillside south of the stone bridge, where the little driving road crosses the stream. The kalmias also seem to be doing well on the hillside facing south, where further kalmias might be added, although not many are needed on either the north or the south of the stream.

If additional broadleaved evergreens are thought desirable, only a very few leucothoe might be used, and these only in groups of two or three, as heavy bunches of planting of broadleaved material have seemed to us--who have long worked on the place--to make the accents too heavy and to weigh down the planting with over-emphasis.

The main charm of the stream side is in the informally placed groups of herbaceous material, such as iris sibirica; blue and white mertensia: ferns: and the simple wild type of daffodils: and occasionally one or two of the smaller mallows: groups of the English cowslips and groups of the candelabra primulas. The English cowslips and the primulas have to be fairly frequently replaced, as these are subject to attack by red spiders or mildew. Therefore, if the park has to watch its upkeep carefully, it should not plant more of these than it can afford to keep in good condition. An occasional clump of the English wild iris might be set by the stream side, but as this increases very rapidly it must be watched or it will become too invasive. In other words, the planting along the stream side must be kept in delicate balance of smallish groups, as masses of one sort or another of large material--such as big groups of kalmias or leucothoe--would destroy the whole illusion of a romantic and yet natural landscape.

The bulbs should be planted in drifts--rather than in clumps and beds--and although these may require additions from time to time, the purchase of these implies a fairly small expenditure so that scilla nutans, in its blue and possibly its white forms, might be added when the clumps diminish to a poverty stricken group.

The outline of the pools is intended to be more or less like the natural shape of a kalmia leaf--and not a straight sided canal through which the water courses in a business-like fashion! When we looked at the stream last autumn it was obvious where the shore-line as first designed had been placed, and "as and when" it is possible, these lines should approximately be replaced as they were, with the deepest part of the pool corresponding to its greatest width. While, of course, the stream is in no way a really natural brook, it should have a certain eighteenth century quality of the naturalistic, which can be preserved by intelligent management and without much cost of plant material.

Doubtless you have arrived at the same conclusions--in whatever moments of respite you have had during your busy winter--and so will forgive, perhaps, what has seemed too long a dissertation on a question of design, with which I feel you and I are in complete agreement.

Looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you in the near future and continuing our talks along the spring brookside, I am

Yours sincerely,

R

Beatrix Farrand

ADDENDUM TO:
DUMBARTON OAKS PARK
Rock Creek Park
Thirty-second & R Streets Northwest
Washington
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